WILD YOUTH AND ANOTHER

GILBERT PARKER

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BY

GILBERT PARKER

AUTHOR OF "THE MONEY MASTER," "THE SEATS OF THE MIGHTY," "THE RIGHT OF WAY," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRANK B. HOFFMAN

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TO
THE MEMORY OF
THE TRUE FRIEND OF TWO GREAT PEOPLES
AND OF HUMANITY
WALTER HINES PAGE

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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CHANCING TO GLANCE FURTHER HE SAW A FACE AT A WINDOW.. *Frontispiece*

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WILD YOUTH

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CHAPTER I

THE MAZARINES TAKE POSSESSION

From the beginning, Askatoon had had more character and idiosyncrasy than any other town in the West. Perhaps that was because many of its citizens had marked personality, while some were distinctly original—a few so original as to be almost bizarre. The general intelligence was high, and this made the place alert for the new observer. It slept with one eye open; it waked with both eyes wide—as wide as the windows of the world. The virtue of being bright and clever was a doctrine which had never been taught in Askatoon; it was as natural as eating and drinking. Nothing ever really shook the place out of a wholesome control and composure. Now and then, however, the flag of distress was hoisted, and everybody in the place—from Patsy Kernaghan, the casual, at one end of the scale, and the Young Doctor, so called because he was young-looking when he first came to the place, who represented Askatoon in the meridian of its intellect, at the other—had sudden paralysis. That was the outstanding feature of Askatoon. Some places made a noise and flung things about in times of distress; but Askatoon always stood still and fumbled with its collar-buttons, as though to get more air. When it was poignantly moved, it leaned against the wall of its common sense, abashed, but vigilant and careful.

That is what it did when Mr. and Mrs. Joel Mazarine

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arrived at Askatoon to take possession of Tralee, the ranch which Michael Turley, abandoning because he had an unavoidable engagement in another world, left to his next of kin, with a legacy to another kinsman a little farther off. The next of kin had proved to be Joel Mazarine, from one of those stern English counties on the borders of Quebec, where ancient tribal prejudices and religious hatreds give a necessary relief to hard-driven human nature.

Michael Turley had lived much to himself on his ranch, but that was because in his latter days he had developed a secret taste for spirituous liquors which he had no wish to share with others. With the assistance of a bad cook and a constant spleen caused by resentment against the intervention of his priest, good Father Roche, he finished his career with great haste and without either becoming a nuisance to his neighbors or ruining his property. The property was clear of mortgage or debt when he set out on his endless journey.

When the prophet-bearded, huge, swarthy-faced Joel Mazarine, with a beautiful young girl behind him, stepped from the West-bound train and was greeted by the Mayor, who was one of the executors of Michael Turley's will, a shiver passed through Askatoon, and for one instant animation was suspended; for the jungle-looking newcomer, motioning forward the young girl, said to the Mayor:

"Mayor, this is Mrs. Mazarine. Shake hands with the Mayor, Mrs. Mazarine."

Mazarine did not speak very loud, but as an animal senses the truth of a danger far off with an unshakable certainty, the crowd at the station seemed to know by instinct what he said.

"Hell—that old whale and her!" growled Jonas Billings, the keeper of the livery-stable.

At Mazarine's words the Young Doctor, a man of rare gifts, individuality and authority in the place, who had come to the station to see a patient off to the mountains by this train, drew in his breath sharply, as though a spirit of repugnance was in his heart. This happened during the first years of the Young Doctor's career at Askatoon, when he was still alive with human prejudices, although he had a nature well balanced and singularly just. The strife between his prejudices and his sense of justice was what made him always interesting in all the great prairie and foothill country of which Askatoon was the center.

He had got his shock, indeed, before Mazarine had introduced his wife to the Mayor. Not for nothing had he studied the human mind in its relation to the human body, and the expression of that mind speaking through the body. The instant Joel Mazarine and his wife stepped out of the train, he knew they were what they were to each other. That was a real achievement in knowledge, because Mazarine was certainly sixty-five if he was a day, and his wife was a slim, willowy slip of a girl, not more than nineteen years of age, with the most wonderful Irish blue eyes and long dark lashes. There was nothing of the wife or woman about her, save something in the eyes, which seemed to belong to ages past and gone, something so solemnly wise, yet so painfully confused, that there flashed into the Young Doctor's mind at first glance of her the vision of a young bird caught from its thoughtless, sun-bright journeyings, its reckless freedom of winged life, into the captivity of a cage.

She smiled, this child, as she shook hands with the

Mayor, and it had the appeal of one who had learned the value of smiling—as though it answered many a question and took the place of words and the trials of the tongue. It was pitifully mechanical. As the Young Doctor saw, it was the smile of a captive in a strange uncomprehended world, more a dream than a reality.

"Mrs. Mazarine, welcome," said the Mayor after an abashed pause. "We're proud of this town, but we'll be prouder still, now you've come."

The girl-wife smiled again. At the same time it was as though she glanced apprehensively out of the corner of her eye at the old man by her side, as she said:

"Thank you. There seems to be plenty of room for us out here, so we needn't get in each other's way. . . . I've never been on the prairie before," she added.

The Young Doctor realized that her reply had meanings which would escape the understanding of the Mayor, and her apprehensive glance had told him of the gruesome jealousy of this old man at her side. The Mayor's polite words had caused the long, clean-shaven upper lip of the old man with the look of a debauched prophet to lengthen surlily; and he noticed that a wide, flat foot in a big knee-boot, inside trousers too short, tapped the ground impatiently.

"We must be getting out to Tralee," said a voice that seemed to force its way through bronchial obstructions. "Come, Mrs. Mazarine."

He laid a big, flat, tropical hand, which gave the impression of being splayed, on the girl's shoulder. The gallant words of the Mayor—a chivalrous mountain-man—had set dark elements working. As the new master of Tralee stepped forward, the Young Doctor could not help noticing how large and hairy were the ears that stood

far out from the devilish head. It was a huge, steel-twisted, primitive man, who somehow gave the impression of a gorilla. The face was repulsive in its combination of surly smugness, as shown by the long upper lip, by a repellent darkness round the small, furtive eyes, by a hardness in the huge, bearded jaw, and by a mouth of primary animalism.

The Mayor caught sight of the Young Doctor, and he stopped the incongruous pair as they moved to the station doorway, the girl in front, as though driven.

"Mr. Mazarine, you've got to know the man who counts for more in Askatoon than anybody else; Doctor, you've got to know Mr. Mazarine," said the generous Mayor.

Repugnance was in full possession of the Young Doctor, but he was scientific and he was philosophic, if nothing else. He shook hands with Mazarine deliberately. If he could prevent it, there should be, where he was concerned, no jealousy, such as Mazarine had shown towards the Mayor, in connection with this helpless, exquisite creature in the grip of hard fate. Shaking hands with the girl with only a friendly politeness in his glance, he felt a sudden eager, clinging clasp of her fingers. It was like lightning, and gone like lightning, as was the look that flashed between them. Somehow the girl instinctively felt the nature of the man, and in spirit flew to him for protection. No one saw the swift look, and in it there was nothing which spoke of youth or heart, of the feeling of man for woman nor woman for man; but only the longing for help on the girl's part, undefined as it was. On the man's part there was a soul whose gift and duty were healing. As the two passed on, the Young Doctor looked around him at the exclaiming crowd, for few had

left the station when the train rolled out. Curiosity was an obsession with the people of Askatoon.

"Well, I never!" said round-faced Mrs. Skinner, with huge hips and gray curls. "Did you ever see the like?"

"I call it a shame," declared an indignant young woman, gripping tighter the hand of her little child, the daughter of a young butcher of twenty-three years of age.

"Poor lamb!" another motherly voice said.

"She ought to be ashamed of herself—money, I suppose," sneered Ellen Banner, a sour-faced shopkeeper's daughter, who had taught in Sunday school for twenty years and was still single.

"Beauty and the beast," remarked the Young Doctor to himself, as he saw the two drive away, Patsy Kernaghan running beside the wagon, evidently trying to make friends with the mastodon of Tralee.

CHAPTER II

"MY NAME IS LOUISE"

Askatoon never included the Mazarines in its social scheme. Certainly Tralee was some distance from the town, but, apart from that, the new-comers remained incongruous, alien and alone. The handsome, inanimate girl-wife never appeared by herself in the streets of Askatoon, but always in the company of her morose husband, whose only human association seemed to be his membership in the Methodist body so prominent in the town. Every Sunday morning he tied his pair of bay horses with the covered buggy to the hitching-post in the church-shed and marched his wife to the very front seat in the Meeting House, having taken possession of it on his first visit, as though it had no other claimants. Subsequently he held it in almost solitary control, because other members of the congregation, feeling his repugnance to companionship, gave him the isolation he wished. As a rule he and his wife left the building before the last hymn was sung, so avoiding conversation. Now and again he stayed to a prayer-meeting and, doing so, invariably "led in prayer," to a very limited chorus of "Amens." For in spite of the position which Tralee conferred on its owner, there was a natural shrinking from "that wild boar," as outspoken Sister Skinner called him in the presence of the puzzled and troubled Minister.

This was always a time of pained confusion for the girl-wife. She had never "got religion," and there was something startling to her undeveloped nature in the thunderous apostrophes, in terms of the oldest part of the

Old Testament, used by her tyrant when he wrestled with the Lord in prayer.

These were perhaps the only times when her face was the mirror of her confused, vague and troubled youth. Captive in a world bounded by a man's will, she simply did not begin to understand this strange and overpowering creature who had taken possession of her body, mind and soul. She trembled and hesitated before every cave of mystery which her daily life with him opened darkly to her abashed eyes. She felt herself going round and round and round in a circle, not forlorn enough to rebel or break away, but dazed and wondering and shrinking. She was like one robbed of will, made mechanical by a stern conformity to imposed rules of life and conduct. There were women in Askatoon who were sorry for her and made efforts to get near her; but whether it was the Methodist Minister or his wife, or the most voluble sister of the prayer-meeting, none got beyond the threshold of Tralee, as it were.

The girl-wife abashed them. She was as one who automatically spoke as she was told to speak, did what she was told to do. Yet she always smiled at the visitors when they came, or when she saw them and others at the Meeting House. It was, however, not a smile for an individual, whoever that individual might chance to be. It was only the kindness of her nature expressing itself. Talking seemed like the exercise of a foreign language to her, but her smiling was free and unconstrained, and it belonged to all, without selection.

The Young Doctor, looking at her one day as she sat in a buggy while her monster-man was inside the chemist's shop, said to himself:

"Sterilized! Absolutely, shamefully sterilized! But

suppose she wakes up suddenly out of that dream between life and death—what will happen?"

He remembered that curious, sudden, delicate catch of his palm on the day when they first shook hands at the railway-station, and to him it was like the flutter of life in a thing which seemed dead. How often he had noticed it in man and animal on the verge of extinction! He had not mistaken that fluttering appeal of her fingers. He was young enough to translate it into flattering terms of emotion, but he did not do so. He was fancy-free himself, and the time would come when he would do a tremendous thing where a woman was concerned, a woman in something the same position as this poor girl; but that shaking, thrilling thing was still far off from him. For this child he only felt the healer's desire to heal.

He was one of those men who never force an issue; he never put forward the hands of the clock. He felt that sooner or later Louise Mazarine—he did not yet know her Christian name—would command his help, as so many had done in that prairie country, and not necessarily for relief of physical pain or the curing of disease. He had helped as many men and women mentally and morally as physically; the spirit of healing was behind everything he did. His world recognized it, and that was why he was never known by his name in all the district—he was only admiringly called "The Young Doctor."

He had never been to Tralee since the Mazarines had arrived, though he had passed it often and had sometimes seen Louise in the garden with her dog, her black cat and her bright canary. The combination of the cat and the canary did not seem incongruous where she was concerned; it was as though something in her passionless self neutralized even the antagonisms of natural history.

She had made the gloomy black cat and the light-hearted canary to be friends. Perhaps that came from an everlasting patience which her life had bred in her; perhaps it was the powerful gift of one in touch with the remote, primitive things.

The Young Doctor had also seen her in the paddock with the horses, bare-headed, lithe and so girlishly slim, with none of the unmistakable if elusive lines belonging to the maturity which marriage brings. He had taken off his hat to her in the distance, but she had never waved a hand in reply. She only stood and gazed at him, and her look followed him long after he passed by. He knew well that in the gaze was nothing of the interest which a woman feels in a man; it was the look of one chained to a rock, who sees a Samaritan in the cheerless distance.

In the daily round of her life she was always busy; not restlessly, but constantly, and always silently, busy. She was even more silent than her laconic half-breed hired woman, Rada. There was no talk with her gloating husband which was not monosyllabic. Her canary sang, but no music ever broke from her own lips. She murmured over her lovely yellow companion; she kissed it, pleaded with it for more song, but the only music at her own lips was the occasional music of her voice; and it had a colorless quality which, though gentle, had none of the eloquence and warmth of youth.

In form and feature she was one made for emotion and demonstration, and the passionate play of the innocent enterprises of wild youth; but there was nothing of that in her. Gray age had drunk her life and had given her nothing in return—neither companionship nor sympathy nor understanding; only the hunger of a coarse manhood. Her obedience to the supreme will of her jealous jailer

gave no ground for scolding or reproach, and that saved her much. She was even quietly cheerful, but it was only the pale reflection of a lost youth which would have been buoyant and gallant, gay and glad, had it been given the natural thing in the natural world.

There came a day, however, when the long, unchanging routine, gray with prison grayness, was broken; when the round of household duties and the prison discipline were interrupted. It was as sudden as a storm in the tropics, as final and as fateful as birth or death. That day she was taken suddenly and acutely ill. It was only a temporary malady, an agonizing pain which had its origin in a sudden chill. This chill was due, as the Young Doctor knew when he came, to a vitality which did not renew itself, which got nothing from the life to which it was sealed, which for some reason could not absorb energy from the stinging, vital life of the prairie world in the June-time.

In her sudden anguish, and in the absence of Joel Mazarine, she sent for the Young Doctor. That in itself was courageous, because it was impossible to tell what view the master of Tralee would take of her action, ill though she was. She was not supposed to exercise her will. If Joel Mazarine had been at home, he would have sent for wheezy, decrepit old Doctor Gensing, whose practice the Young Doctor had completely absorbed over a series of years.

But the Young Doctor came. Rada, the half-breed woman, had undressed Louise and put her to bed; and he found her white as snow at the end of a paroxysm of pain, her long eyelashes lying on a cheek as smooth as a piece of Satsuma ware which has had the loving polish of ten thousand friendly fingers over innumerable years.

When he came and stood beside her bed, she put out her hand slowly towards him. As he took it in his firm, reassuring grasp, he felt the same fluttering appeal which had marked their hand-clasp on the day of their first meeting at the railway-station. Looking at the huge bed and the rancher-farmer's coarse clothes hanging on pegs, the big greased boots against the wall, a sudden savage feeling of disgust and anger took hold of him; but the spirit of healing at once emerged, and he concentrated himself upon the instant duty before him.

For a whole hour he worked with her, and at length subdued the convulsions of pain which distorted the beautiful face and made the childlike body writhe. He had a resentment against the crime which had been committed. Marriage had not made her into a woman; it had driven her back into an arrested youth. It was as though she ought to have worn short skirts and her hair in a long braid down her back. Hers was the body of a young boy. When she was free from pain, and the color had come back to her cheeks a little, she smiled at him, and was about to put out her hand as a child might to a brother or a father, when suddenly a shadow stole into her eyes and crept across her face, and she drew her clenched hand close to her body. Still, she tried to smile at him.

His quiet, impersonal, though friendly look soothed her.

"Am I very sick?" she asked.

He shook his head and smiled. "You'll be all right to-morrow, I hope."

"That's too bad," she remarked. "I would like to be so sick that I couldn't think of anything else. My father used to say that the world was only the size of four walls to a sick person."

"I can't promise you so small a world," remarked the Young Doctor with a kind smile, his arm resting on the side of the bed, his chair drawn alongside. "You will have to face the whole universe to-morrow, same as ever."

She looked perplexed a moment and then said to him: "I used to think it was a beautiful world, and they try to make me think it is yet; but it isn't."

"Who try to make you?" he asked.

"Oh, my bird Richard, and Nigger the black cat, and Jumbo, the dog," she replied.

Her eyes closed, then opened strangely wide upon him in an eager, staring appeal.

"Don't you want to know about me?" she asked. "I want to tell you—I want to tell you. I'm tired of telling it all over to myself."

The Young Doctor did not want to know. As a doctor he did not want to know.

"Not now," he said firmly. "Tell me when I come again."

A look of pain came into her face. "But who can tell when you'll come again!" she pleaded.

"When I will things to be, they generally happen," he answered in a commonplace tone. "You are my patient now, and I must keep an eye on you. So I'll come."

Again, with an almost spasmodical movement towards him, she said:

"I must tell you. I wanted to tell you the first day I saw you. You seemed the same kind of man my father was. My name's Louise. It was my mother made me do it. There was a mortgage—I was only sixteen. It's three years ago. He said to my mother he'd tear up the mortgage if I married him. That's why I'm here with him—Mrs. Mazarine. But my name's Louise."

"Yes, yes, I know," the Young Doctor answered soothingly. "But you must not talk of it now. I understand perfectly. Tell me all about it another time."

"You don't think I should have——" She paused.

"Of course. I tell you I understand. Now you must be quiet. Drink this." He got up and poured some liquid into a glass.

At that moment there was a noise below in the hall.

"That's my husband," the girl-wife said, and the old wan captive-look came into her face.

"That's all right," replied the Young Doctor. "He'll find you better."

At that moment the half-breed woman entered the room. "He's here," she said, and came towards the bed.

"That old woman has sense," the Young Doctor murmured to himself. "She knows her man."

A minute later Joel Mazarine was in the room, and he saw the half-breed woman lift his wife's head, while the Young Doctor held a glass to her lips.

"What's all this?" Mazarine said roughly. "What——?" He stopped suddenly, for the Young Doctor faced him sharply.

"She must be left alone," he said firmly and quietly, his eyes fastening the old man's eyes; and there was that in them which would not be gainsaid. "I have just given her medicine. She has been in great pain. We are not needed here now." He motioned towards the door. "She must be left alone."

For an instant it seemed that the old man was going to resist the dictation; but presently, after a scrutinizing look at the still, shrinking figure in the bed, he swung round, left the room and descended the stairs, the Young Doctor following.

CHAPTER III

"I HAVE FOUGHT WITH BEASTS AT EPHESUS"

THE old man led the way outside the house, as though to be rid of his visitor as soon as possible. This was so obvious that, for an instant, the Young Doctor was disposed to try conclusions with the old slaver, and summon him back to the dining room. The Mazarine sort of man always roused fighting, masterful forces in him. He was never averse to a contest of wills, and he had had much of it; it was inseparable from his methods of healing. He knew that nine people out of ten never gave a true history of their physical troubles, never told their whole story: first because they had no gift for reporting, no observation; and also because the physical ailments of many of them were aggravated or induced by mental anxieties. Then it was that he imposed himself—as it were, fought the deceiver and his deceit, or the ignorant one and his ignorance; and numbers of people, under his sympathetic, wordless inquiry, poured their troubles into his ears, as the girl-wife upstairs had tried to do.

When the old man turned to face him in the sunlight, his boots soiled with dust and manure, his long upper lip feeling about over the lower lip and its shaggy growth of beard like some sea-monster feeling for its prey, the Young Doctor had a sensation of uncompromising rancor. His mind flashed to that upstairs room, where a comely captive creature was lying not an arm's-length from the coats and trousers and shabby waistcoats of this barbarian. Somehow that row of tenantless clothes, and the top-boots, greased with tallow, standing against the wall,

were more characteristic of the situation than the old land-leviathan himself, blinking his beady, greenish eyes at the Young Doctor. That everlasting blinking was a repulsive characteristic; it was like serpents gulping live things.

"What's the matter with her?" the old man asked, jerking his head towards the upper window.

The Young Doctor explained quickly the immediate trouble, and then added:

"But it would not have taken hold of her so if she was not run down. She is not in a condition to resist. When her system exhausts, it does not refill, as it were."

"What sort of dictionary talk is that? Run down—here!" The old man sniffed the air like an ancient sow. "Run down—in this life, with the best of food, warm weather, and more ozone than a sailor gets at sea! It's an insult to Jehovah, such nonsense." Moroseness grew with every word; the long upper lip became more sulkily active.

"Mr. Mazarine," rejoined the Young Doctor with ominous determination in his eye, "you know a good deal, I should think, about spring wheat and fall ploughing, about making sows fat, or burning fallow land—that's your trade, and I shouldn't want to challenge you on it all; or you know when to give a horse bran-mash, or a heifer saltpeter, but—well, I know my job in the same way. They will tell you, about here, that I have a kind of hobby for keeping people from digging and crawling into their own graves. That's my business; and the habit of saving human life, because you're paid for it, becomes in time a habit of saving human life for its very own sake. I warn you—and perhaps it's a matter of some concern to you—Mrs. Mazarine is in a bad way."

Resentful and incredulous, the old man was about to speak, but the Young Doctor made an arresting gesture, and added:

"She has very little strength to go on with. She ought to be plump; her pulses ought to beat hard; her cheeks ought to be rosy; she should walk with a spring and be strong and steady as a soldier on the march; but she is none of these things, can do none of these things. You've got a thousand things to do, and you do them because you want to do them. There is something making new life in you all the time, but Mrs. Mazarine makes no new life as she goes on. Every day is taking something out of her, and there's nothing being renewed. Sometimes neither good food nor ozone is enough; and you've got to take care, or you'll lose Mrs. Mazarine." He could not induce himself to speak of her as "wife."

For a moment the unwholesome mouth seemed to be chewing unpleasant herbs, and the beady eyes blinked viciously.

"I'm not swallowin' your meaning," Mazarine said at last. "I never studied Greek. If a woman has a disease, there it is, and you can deal with it or not; but if she hasn't no disease, then it's chicanyery—chicanyery. Doctors talk a lot of gibberish these here days. What I want to know is, has my wife got a disease? I haven't seen any signs. Is it Bright's, or cancer, or the lungs, or the liver, or the kidneys, or the heart, or what's its name?"

The young Doctor had an impulse to flay the soulless heathen, but for the girl-wife's sake he forbore.

"I don't think it is any of those troubles," he replied smoothly. "She needs a thorough examination. But one thing is clear: she is wasting; she is losing ground instead of going ahead. There's a malignant influence

working. She's standing still, and to stand still in youth is fatal. I can imagine you don't want to lose her, eh?"

The Young Doctor's gray-blue eyes endeavored to hold the blinking beads under the shaggy eyebrows long enough to get control of a mind which had the cunning and cruelty of an animal possessed by its own fierce loves and passions. He succeeded.

The old man would a thousand times rather his wife lived than died. In the first place, to lose her was to sacrifice that which he had paid for dearly—a mortgage of ten thousand dollars torn up. Louise Mazarine represented that to him first—ten thousand dollars. Secondly, she was worth it in every way. He had what hosts of others would be glad to have—men younger and better looking than himself. She represented the triumph of age. He had lived his life; he had buried two wives; he had had children; he had made money; and yet here, when other men of his years were thinking of making wills, and eating porridge, and waiting for the Dark Policeman to come and arrest them for loitering, he was left a magnificent piece of property like Tralee; and he had all the sources of pleasure open to a young man walking the primrose path. He was living right up to the last. Both his wives were gray-headed when they died—it turned them gray to live with him; both had died before they were fifty; and here he was the sole owner of a wonderful young head, with hair that reached to the waist, with lips like cool fruit from an orchard-tree, and the indescribable charm of youth and loveliness which the young themselves never really understand. That was what he used to say to himself: it was only age could appreciate youth and beauty; youth did not understand.

Thus the Young Doctor's question roused in him some-

thing at once savage and apprehensive. Of course he wanted Louise to live. Why should she not live?

"Doesn't any husband want his wife to live!" he answered sullenly. "But I want to know what ails her. What medicine you going to give her?"

"I don't know," the Young Doctor replied meditatively. "When she is quite rid of this attack, I'll examine her again and let you know."

Suddenly there shot into the greenish old eyes a reddish look of rage; jealousy, horrible, gruesome jealousy, took possession of Joel Mazarine. This young man to come in and go out of his wife's bedroom, to—— Why weren't there women doctors? He would get one over from the Coast or from Winnipeg, or else there was old Doctor Gensing, in Askatoon—who was seventy-five at least. He would call him in and get rid of this offensive young pill-maker.

"I don't believe there's anything the matter with her," he declared stubbornly. "She's been healthy as a woman can be, living this life here. What's her disease? I've asked you. What is it?"

The other laid a hand on himself, and in the colorless voice of the expert, said: "Old age—that's her trouble, so far as I can see."

He paused, foreseeing the ferocious look which swept into the repulsive face, and the clenching of the big, splay-like hands. Then in a soothing, reflective kind of voice he added:

"Senile decay—you know all about that. Well, now, it happens sometimes—not often, but it does happen sometimes—that a very young person for some cause or another suffers from senile decay. Some terrible leakage

of youth occurs. It has been cured, though, and I've cured one or two cases myself."

He was almost prevaricating—but in a good cause. "Mrs. Mazarine's is a case which can be cured, I think," he continued. "As you've remarked, Mr. Mazarine"—his voice was now persuasive—"here is fine air, and a good, comfortable home——"

Suddenly he broke off, and as though in innocent inquiry said: "Now, has she too much to do? Has she sufficient help in the house for one so young?"

"She doesn't do more than's good for her," answered the old man, "and there's the half-breed hired critter—you've seen her—and Li Choo, a Chinaman, too. That ought to be enough," he added scornfully.

The Young Doctor seemed to reflect, and his face became urbane, because he saw he must proceed warily, if he was to be of service to his new patient.

"Yes," he said emphatically, "she appears to have help enough. I must think over her case and see her again to-morrow."

The old man's look suddenly darkened. "Ain't she better?" he asked.

"She's not so much better that there's no danger of her being worse," the Young Doctor replied decisively. "I certainly must see her to-morrow."

"Why," the old man remarked, waving his splayed hand up and down in a gesture of emphasis, "she's never been sick. She's in and out of this house all day. She goes about with her animals like as if she hadn't a care or an ache or pain in the world. I've heard of women that fancied they was sick because they hadn't too much to do, and was too well off, and was treated too well. Hysterics, they call it. Lots of women, lots and lots of them,

would be glad to have such a home as this, and would stay healthy in it."

The Young Doctor felt he had made headway, and he let it go at that. It was clear he was to be permitted to come to-morrow. "Yes, it's a fine place," he replied convincingly. "Three thousand acres is a mighty big place when you've got farm-land as well as cattle-grazing."

"It's nearly all good farm-land," answered the old man with decision. "I don't believe much in ranching or cattle. I'm for the plough and the wheat. There's more danger from cattle disease than from bad crops. I'm getting rid of my cattle. I expect to sell a lot of 'em to-day." An avaricious smile of satisfaction drew down the corners of his lips. "I've got a good customer. He ought to be on the trail now." He drew out a huge silver watch. "Yes, he's due. The party's a foreigner, I believe. He lives over at Slow Down Ranch—got a French name."

"Oh, Giggles!" said the Young Doctor with a quick smile.

The old man shook his hippopotamus head: "No, that ain't the name. It's Guise—Orlando Guise is the name."

"Same thing," remarked the Young Doctor. "They call him Giggles for short. You've seen him of course?"

"No, I've been dealing with him so far through a third party. Why's he called Giggles?" asked the Master of Tralee.

"Well, you'll know when you see him. He's not cut according to everybody's measure. If you're dealing with him, don't think him a fool because he chirrups, and don't size him up according to his looks. He's a dude. Some

call him The Duke, but mostly he's known as Giggles."

"Fools weary me," grumbled the other.

"Well, as I said, you mustn't begin dealing with him on the basis of his looks. Looks don't often tell the truth. For instance, you're known as a Christian and a Methodist!" He looked the old man slowly up and down, and in anyone else it would have seemed gross insolence, but the urbane smile at his lips belied the malice of his words. "Well, you know you don't look like a Methodist. You look like"—innocence showed in his eye; there was no ulterior purpose in his face—"you look like one of the bad McMahon lot of claim-jumpers over there in the foothills. I suppose that seems so, only because ranchmen aren't generally pious. Well, in the same way, Giggles doesn't really look like a ranchman; but he's every bit as good a ranchman as you are a Christian and a Methodist!"

The Young Doctor looked the old man in the face with such a semblance of honesty that he succeeded in disarming a dangerous suspicion of mockery—dangerous, if he was to continue family physician at Tralee. "Ah," he suddenly remarked, "there comes Orlando now!" He pointed to a spot about half a mile away, where a horseman could be seen cantering slowly towards Tralee.

A moment afterwards, from his buggy, the Young Doctor said: "Mrs. Mazarine must be left alone until I see her again. She must not be disturbed. The half-breed woman can look after her. I've told her what to do. You'll keep to another room, of course."

"There's a bunk in that room where I could sleep," said the other, with a note of protest.

"I'm afraid that, in our patient's interest, you must do what I say," the other insisted with a friendly smile

which caused him a great effort. "If I make her bloom again, that will suit you, won't it?"

A look of gloating came into the behemoth's eyes: "Let it go at that," he said. "Mebbe I'll take her over to the sea before the wheat-harvest."

Out on the Askatoon trail, the Young Doctor ruminated over what he had seen and heard at Tralee.

"That old geezer will get an awful jolt one day," he said to himself. "If that girl should wake! Her eyes—if somebody comes along and draws the curtains! She hasn't the least idea of where she is or what it all means. All she knows is that she's a prisoner in some strange, savage country and doesn't know its language or anybody at all—as though she'd lost her memory. Any fellow, young, handsome and with enough dash and color to make him romantic could do it. . . . Poor little robin in the snow!" he added, and looked back towards Tralee.

As he did so, the man from Slow Down Ranch cantering towards Tralee caught his eye.

"Louise—Orlando," he said musingly; then, with a sudden flick of the reins on his horse's back, he added abruptly, almost sternly, "By the great horn spoons, no!"

Thus, when his prophecy took concrete form, he revolted from it. A grave look came into his face.

CHAPTER IV

TWO SIDES TO A BARGAIN

As the Young Doctor had said, Orlando Guise did not look like a real, simon-pure "cowpuncher." He had the appearance of being dressed for the part, like an actor who has never mounted a cayuse, in a Wild West play. Yet on this particular day—when the whole prairie country was alive with light, thrilling with elixir from the bottle of old Eden's vintage, and as comfortable as a garden where upon a red wall the peaches cling—he seemed far more than usual the close-fitting, soil-touched son of the prairie. His wide felt hat, turned up on one side like a trooper's, was well back on his head; his pinkish brown face was freely taking the sun, and his clear, light-blue eyes gazed ahead unblinking in the strong light. His forehead was unwrinkled—a rare thing in that prairie country where the dry air corrugates the skin; his light-brown hair curled loosely on the brow, graduating back to closer, crisper curls which in their thickness made a kind of furry cap. It was like the coat of a French poodle, so glossy and so companionable was it to the head. A bright handkerchief of scarlet was tied loosely around his throat, which was even a little more bare than was the average ranchman's; and his thick, much-pocketed flannel shirt, worn in place of a waistcoat and coat, was of a shade of red which contrasted and yet harmonized with the scarlet of the neckerchief. He did not wear the sheep-skin leggings so common among the ranchmen of the West, but a pair of yellowish corduroy riding-breeches, with boots that laced from the ankle to the knee. These boots

had that touch of the theatrical which made him more fantastic than original in the eyes of his fellow-citizens.

Also he wore a ring with a star-sapphire, which made him incongruous, showy and foppish, and that was a thing not easy of forgiveness in the West. Certainly the West would not have tolerated him as far as it did, had it not been for three things: the extraordinary good nature which made him giggle; the fact that on more than one occasion he had given conclusive evidence that he was brave; and the knowledge that he was at least well-to-do. In a kind of vague way people had come reluctantly to realize that his giggles belonged to a nature without guile and recklessly frank.

"He beats the band," Jonas Billings, the livery-stable keeper, had said of him; while Burlingame, the pernicious lawyer of shady character, had remarked that he had the name of an impostor and the frame of a fop, but he wasn't sure as a lawyer that he'd seen all the papers in the case—which was tatamount to saying that the Orlando nut needed some cracking.

It was generally agreed that his name was ridiculous, romantic and unreasonable. It seemed to challenge public opinion. Most names in the West were without any picturesqueness or color; they were commonplace and almost geometric in their form, more like numbers to represent people than things of character in themselves. There were names semi-scriptural and semi-foreign in Askatoon, but no name like Orlando Guise had ever come that way before, and nothing like the man himself had ever ridden the Askatoon trails. One thing had to be said, however; he rode the trail like a broncho-buster, and he sat his horse as though he had been born in the saddle. On this particular day, in spite of his garish "get-up," he

seemed to belong to the life in which he was light-heartedly whistling a solo from one of Meyerbeer's operas. Meyerbeer was certainly incongruous to the prairie, but it and the whistling were in keeping with the man himself.

Over on Slow Down Ranch there lived a curious old lady who wore a bonnet of Sweet Sixteen of the time of the Crimea, and with a sense of color which would wreck the reputation of a kaleidoscope. She it was who had taught her son Orlando the tunefulness of Meyerbeer and Balfe and Offenbach, and the operatic jingles of that type of composer. Orlando Guise had come by his outward showiness naturally. Yet he was not like his mother, save in this particular. His mother was flighty and had no sense, while he, behind the gaiety of his wardrobe and his giggles, had very much sense of a quite original kind. Even as he whistled Meyerbeer, riding towards Tralee, his eyes had a look of one who was trying to see into things; and his lips, when the whistling ceased, had a cheerful pucker which seemed to show that he had seen what he wanted.

"Wonder if I'll get a glimpse of the so-called Mrs. Mazarine," he said aloud. "Bad enough to marry a back-timer, but to marry Mazarine—they don't say she's blind, either! Money—what won't we do for money, Mary? But if she's as young as they say, she could have waited a bit for the oof-bird to fly her way. Lots of men have money as well as looks. Anyhow, I'm ready to take his cattle off his hands on a fair, square deal, and if his girl-missis is what they say, I wouldn't mind——"

Having said this, he giggled and giggled again at his unspoken impertinence. He knew he had almost said something fatuous, but the suppressed idea appealed to him, nevertheless; for whatever he did, he always had

a vision of doing something else; and wherever he was, he was always fancying himself to be somewhere else. That was the strain of romance in him which came from his mixed ancestry. It was the froth and bubble of a dreamer's legacy, which had made his mother, always unconsciously theatrical, have a vision of a life on the prairies, with the white mountains in the distance, where her beloved son would be master of a vast domain, over which he should ride like one of Cortez's conquistadores. Having "money to burn," she had, at a fortunate moment, bought the ranch which, by accident, had done well from the start, and bade fair, through the giggling astuteness of her spectacular son, to do far better still by design.

On the first day of their arrival at Slow Down Ranch, the mother had presented Orlando with a most magnificent Mexican bridle and head-stall covered with silver conchs, and a saddle with stirrups inlaid with silver. Wherefore, it was no wonder that most people stared and wondered, while some sneered and some even hated. On the whole, however, Orlando Guise was in the way of making a place for himself in the West in spite of natural drawbacks.

Old Mazarine did not merely sneer as he saw the gay cavalier approach, he snorted; and he would have blasphemed, if he had not been a professing Christian.

"Circus rider!" he said to himself. "Wants taking down some, and he's come to the right place to get it."

On his part, Orlando Guise showed his dislike of the repellent figure by a brusque giggle, and further expressed what was in his mind by the one word:

"Turk!"

His repugnance, however, was balanced by something possessing the old man still more disagreeable. Like a malignant liquid, there crept up through Joel Mazarine's

body to the roots of his hair the ancient virus of Cain. It was jealous, ravenous, grim: old age hating the rich, robust, panting youth of the man before him. Was it that being half man, half beast, he had some animal instinct concerning this young roughrider before him? Did he in some vague, prescient way associate this gaudy newcomer with his girl-wife? He could not himself have said. Primitive passions are corporate of many feelings but of little sight.

As Orlando Guise slid from his horse, Joel Mazarine steadied himself and said: "Come about the cattle? Ready to buy and pay cash down?"

Orlando Guise giggled.

"What are you sniggering at?" snorted the old man.

"I thought it was understood that if I liked the bunch I was to pay cash," Orlando replied. "I've got a good report of the beasts, but I want to look them over. My head cattleman told you what I'd do. That's why I smiled. Funny, too: you don't look like a man who'd talk more than was wanted." He giggled again.

"Fool—I'll make you laugh on the other side of your mouth!" the Master of Tralee said to himself; and then he motioned to where a bunch of a hundred or so cattle were grazing in a little dip of the country between them and Askatoon. "I'll get my buckboard. It's all hitched up and ready, and we can get down and see them right now," he said aloud.

"Won't you find it rough going on the buckboard? Better ride," remarked Orlando Guise.

"I don't ever notice rough going," grunted the old man. "Some people ride horses to show themselves off; I ride a buckboard 'cause it suits me."

Orlando Guise chirruped. "Say, we mustn't get

scrapping," he said gaily. "We've got to make a bargain."

In a few moments they were sweeping across the prairie, and sure enough the buckboard bumped, tumbled and plunged into the holes of the gophers and coyotes, but the old man sat the seat with the tenacity of a gorilla clinging to the branch of a tree.

In about three-quarters of an hour the two returned to Tralee, and in front of the house the final bargaining took place. There was a difference of five hundred dollars between them, and the old man fought stubbornly for it; and though Orlando giggled, it was clear he was no fool at a bargain, and that he had many resources. At last he threw doubt upon the pedigree of a bull. With a snarl Mazarine strode into the house. He had that pedigree, and it was indisputable. He would show the young swaggerer that he could not be caught anywhere in this game.

As Joel Mazarine entered the doorway of the house Orlando giggled again, because he had two or three other useful traps ready, and this was really like baiting a bull. Every thrust made this bull more angry; and Orlando knew that if he became angry enough he could bring things to a head with a device by which the old man would be forced to yield; for he did not want to buy, as much as Mazarine wished to sell.

The device, however, was never used, and Orlando ceased giggling suddenly; for chancing to glance further he saw a face at a window, pale, exquisite, delicate, with eyes that stared and stared at him as though he were a creature from some other world.

Such a look he had never seen in anybody's eyes; such a look Louise Mazarine had never given in her life before.

Something had drawn her out of her bed in spite of herself—a voice which was not that of old Joel Mazarine, but a new, fresh, vibrant voice which broke into little spells of inconsequent laughter. She loved inconsequent laughter, and never heard it at Tralee. She had crept from her bed and to the window, and before he saw her she had watched him with a look which slowly became an awakening—as though curtains had been drawn aside revealing a new, strange, ecstatic world.

Louise Mazarine had seen something she had never seen before, because a feeling had been born in her which she had never felt. She had never fully known what sex was, or in any real sense what man meant. This romantic, picturesque, buoyant figure of youth struck her as the rock was struck by Moses; and for the first time in all her days she was wholly alive. Also, for the first time in his life, Orlando Guise felt a wonder which in spite of the hereditary romance in him had never touched him before. Like Ferdinand and Miranda in "The Tempest," "they changed eyes."

A heavy step was heard coming through the hallway, and at once the exquisite, staring face at the window vanished—while Orlando Guise turned his back upon the open doorway and walked a few steps towards the gate in an effort to recover himself. When he turned again to meet Mazarine, who had a paper in his hand, there was a flush on his cheek and a new light in his eye. The old man did not notice that, however, for his avaricious soul was fixed upon the paper in his hand. He thrust it before Orlando's eyes.

"What you got to say to that, Mister?" he demanded.

Orlando appeared to examine the paper carefully, and presently he handed it back and said slowly: "That gives

you the extra five hundred. It's a bargain." How suddenly he had capitulated!

"Cash?" asked the old man triumphantly. How should he know by what means Orlando had been conquered!

"I've got a check in my pocket. I'll fill in it in."

"A check ain't cash," growled the grizzly one.

"You can cash it in an hour. Come in to Askatoon, and I'll get you the cash with it now," said Orlando.

"I can't. A man's coming for a stallion I want to sell. Give me a hundred dollars cash now to clinch the bargain, and I'll meet you at Askatoon to-morrow and get the whole of it in cash. I don't deal with banks. I pay hard money, and I get hard money. That's my rule."

"Well, you're in luck, for I've got a hundred dollars," answered Orlando. "I've just got that, and a dollar besides, in my pocket. To-morrow you go to my lawyer, Burlingame, at Askatoon, and you'll get the rest of the money. It will be there waiting for you."

"Cash?" pressed the old man.

"Certainly: government hundred-dollar bills. Give me a receipt for this hundred dollars."

"Come inside," said the old man almost cheerfully. He loved having his own way. He was almost insanely self-willed. It did his dark soul good to triumph over this "circus rider."

As Joel Mazarine preceded him, Orlando looked up at the window again. For one swift instant the beautiful, pale face of the girl-wife appeared, and then vanished.

At the doorway of the house Orlando Guise stumbled. That was an unusual thing to happen to him. He was too athletic to step carelessly, and yet he stumbled and giggled. It was not a fatuous giggle, however. In it were all kinds of strange things.

CHAPTER V

ORLANDO HAS AN ADVENTURE

BURLINGAME had the best practice of any lawyer in Askatoon, although his character had its shady side. The prairie standards were not low; but tolerance is natural where the community is ready-made—where people from all points of the compass come together with all sorts of things behind them—where standards have at first no organized sanction. Financially Burlingame was honest enough, his defects being associated with those ancient sources of misconduct, wine and women—and in his case the morphia habit as well. It said much for his physique that, in spite of his indulgences, he not only remained a presentable figure but a lucky and successful lawyer.

Being something of a philosopher, the Young Doctor looked upon Burlingame chiefly as one of those inevitable vintages from a vineyard which, according to the favor or disfavor of Heaven, yields from the same soil both good and bad. He had none of that Puritanism which would ruthlessly root out the vines yielding the bad wine. To his mind that could only be done by the axe, the rope or the bullet. It seemed of little use, and very unfair, to drive the wolf out of your own garden into that of your neighbor. Therefore Burlingame must be endured.

The day after the Young Doctor had paid his professional visit to Tralee, and Orlando Guise had first seen the girl-wife of the behemoth, the Young Doctor visited Burlingame's office. Burlingame had only recently returned from England, whither he had gone on important legal business, which he had agreeably balanced by unguarded

adventures in forbidden paths. He was in an animated mood. Three things had just happened which had given him great pleasure.

In the morning he had gained a verdict of acquittal in the case of one of the McMahon gang for manslaughter connected with jumping a claim; and this meant increased reputation.

He had also got a letter from Orlando Guise, and a check for six thousand dollars, with instructions to pay the amount in cash to Joel Mazarine; and this meant a chance of meeting Mazarine and perhaps getting a new client.

Likewise he had received a letter of instructions from a client in Montreal, a kinsman and legatee of old Michael Turley, the late owner of Tralee, in connection with a legacy. This would involve some legal proceedings with considerable costs, and also contact with Joel Mazarine, whom he had not yet seen; for Mazarine had come while he was away in England.

His interest in Mazarine, however, was really an interest in Mrs. Mazarine, concerning whom he had heard things which stimulated his imagination. To him a woman was the supreme interest of existence, apart from making a necessary living. He was the primitive and pernicious hunter. He had been discreet enough not to question people too closely where Mazarine's wife was concerned, but there was, however, one gossip whom Burlingame questioned with some freedom. This was Patsy Kernaghan.

Before the Young Doctor arrived at his office this particular morning, Patsy, who had followed him from the court-house, was put under a light and skilful cross-examination. He had been of service to Burlingame

more than once; and he was regarded as a useful man to do odd jobs for his office, as for other offices in Askatoon.

"Aw, him—that murdering moloch at Tralee!" exclaimed Patsy when the button was pressed. "That Methodis' fella with the face of a pirate! If there wasn't a better Protistan' than him in the world, the Meeting Houses'd be used for kindlin'-wood. Joel, they call him—a dacint prophet's name misused!

"I h'ard him praying once, as I stood outside the Meetin' House windys. To hear that holy hyena lift up his voice to the skies! Shure, I've niver been the same man since, for the voice of him says wan thing, and the look of him another. Sez I to meself, Mr. Burlingame, y'r anner, the minute I first saw him, sez I, 'Askatoon's no safe place for me.' Whin wan like that gits a footin' in a place, the locks can't be too manny to shut ye in whin ye want to sleep at night. That fella's got no pedigree, and if it wouldn't hurt some dacent woman, maybe, I'd say he was misbegotten. But still, I'll tell ye: out there at Tralee there's what'd have saved Sodom and Gomorrah—aye, that'd have saved Jerusalem, and there wouldn't ha' been a single moan from Jeremiah. Out at Tralee there's as beautiful a little lady as you'd want to see. Just a girl she is, not more than nineteen or twenty years of age. She's got a face that'd make ye want to lift the chorals an' the antiphones to her every marnin'. She's got the figure of one that was never to grow up, an' there she is the wedded wife of that crocodile great-grandfather.

"Aw, I know all about it, Mr. Burlingame, y'r anner. How do I know? Didn't Michael Turley tell me before he died what sort o' man his cousin was? Didn't he tell me Joel Mazarine married first whin he was eighteen

years of age; an' his daughter was married whin she was seventeen; an' her son was married whin he was eighteen —an' Joel's a great-grandfather now. An' see him out there with her that looks as if the kindergarten was the place for her."

"Do you go to Tralee often?" asked Burlingame.

"Aw yis. There's a job now and then to do. I'm ridin' an old moke on errands for him whin his hired folks is busy. A man must live, and there's that purty lass with the Irish eyes! Man alive, but it goes to me heart to luk at her."

"Well, I think I must have a 'luk' at her then," was Burlingame's half satirical remark.

Not long after Patsy Kernaghan had left Burlingame's office, the Young Doctor came. His business was brief, and he was about to leave when Burlingame said:

"The Mazarines out at Tralee—you know them? They came while I was away. Queer old goat, isn't he?"

"His exact place in natural history I'm not able to select," answered the Young Doctor dryly, "but I know him."

"And his wife—you know her?" asked Burlingame casually.

The other nodded. "Yes—in a professional way."

"Has she been sick?"

"She is ill now," replied the Young Doctor.

"What's the matter?"

"What's the truth about that McMahon claim-jumper who was acquitted this morning?" asked the Young Doctor with a quizzical eye and an acid note to his voice. "You've got your verdict, but you know the real truth, and you mustn't and won't tell it. Well?"

Burlingame saw. "Well, I'll have to ask the old goat myself," he said. "He's coming here to-day."

He took up Orlando Guise's letter from the table, glanced at it smilingly, and threw it down again.

"He must be a queer specimen," Burlingame continued. "He wouldn't take Orlando Guise's check yesterday. He says he'll only be paid in hard cash. He's coming here this afternoon to get it. He's a crank, whatever else he is. They tell me he doesn't keep a bank account. If he gets a check, he has it changed into cash. If he wants to send a check away, he buys one for cash from somebody. He pays for everything in cash, if he can. Actually, he hasn't a banking account in the place. Cash—nothing but cash! What do you think of that?"

The Young Doctor nodded: "Cash as a habit is useful. Every man must have his hobby, I suppose. Considering the crimes tried at the court in this town, Mazarine's got unusual faith in human nature; or else he feels himself pretty safe at Tralee."

"Thieves?" asked Burlingame satirically.

"Yes, I believe that's still the name, though judging from some of your talk in the court-house it's a word that gives opportunity to take cover. I hope your successful client of to-day, and his brothers, are not familiar with the ways of Mr. Mazarine. I hope they don't know about this six thousand dollars in cold cash."

A sneering, sour smile came to Burlingame's lips. The medical man's dry allusions touched him on the raw all too often.

"Oh, of course, I told them all about that six thousand dollars! Of course! A lot of people suspect those McMahons of being crooked. Well, it has never been

proved. Until it's proved, they're entitled——" Burlingame paused.

"To the benefit of the doubt, eh?"

"Why not? I've heard you hold the balance pretty fair 'twixt your patients and the undertaker."

Quite unmoved, the Young Doctor coolly replied: "In your own happy phrase—of course! I get a commission from the undertaker when the patient's a poor man; when he's a rich man, I keep him alive! It pays. The difference between your friends the criminals and me is that probably nobody will ever be able to catch me out. But the McMahons, we'll get them yet"—a stern, determined look came into his honest eye—"yes, we'll get them yet. They're a nasty fringe on the skirts of Askatoon.

"But there it is as it is," he continued. "You take their dirty money, and I don't refuse pay when I'm called in to attend the worst man in the West, whoever he may be. Why, Burlingame, as your family physician, I shouldn't hesitate even to present my account against your estate if, in a tussle with the devil, he got you out of my hands."

Now a large and friendly smile covered his face. He liked hard hitting, but he also liked to take human nature as it was, and not to quarrel. Burlingame, on his part, had no desire for strife with the Young Doctor. He would make a very dangerous enemy. His return smile was a great effort, however. Ruefulness and exasperation were behind it.

The Young Doctor had been gone only a few minutes when Joel Mazarine entered Burlingame's office.

"I've come about that six thousand dollars Mr. Guise

of Slow Down Ranch owes me," the old man said without any formal salutation. He was evidently not good-humored.

At sight of Mazarine, Burlingame at once accepted the general verdict concerning him. That, however, would not prejudice him greatly. Burlingame had no moral sense. Mazarine's face might revolt him, but not his character.

"I've got the cash here for you, and I'll have in a witness and hand the money over at once," he said. "The receipt is ready. I assume you *are* Joel Mazarine," he added, in a weak attempt at being humorous.

"Get on with the business, Mister," said the old man surlily.

In a few moments he had the six thousand dollars in good government notes in two inner pockets of his shirt. It made him feel very warm and comfortable. His face almost relaxed into a smile when he bade Burlingame good-day.

Burlingame had said nothing about the letter from the late Michael Turley's kinsman in Montreal and the question of the legacy. This was deliberate on his part. He wanted an excuse to visit Tralee and see its mistress with his own eyes. He had attempted to pluck many flowers in his day, and had not been unsuccessful. Out at Tralee was evidently a rare orchid carefully shielded by the gardener.

As Mazarine left the lawyer's office, he met in the doorway that member of the McMahon family for whom Burlingame had secured a verdict of acquittal a couple of hours before. As was his custom, Mazarine gave the other a sharp, scrutinizing look, but he saw no one he knew; and he passed on. The furtive smile which had

betrayed his content at pocketing the six thousand dollars still lingered at the corners of his mouth.

Though he did not know the legally innocent McMahon whom he had just passed, McMahon was not so ignorant. There was no one in all the countryside whom the McMahons did not know. It was their habit—or something else—to be familiar with the history of everybody thereabouts, although they lived secluded lives at Arrowhead Ranch, which adjoined that belonging to Orlando Guise.

When TomMcMahon saw Mazarine leave Burlingame's office, his furtive eye lighted. Then it was true, what he had heard from the hired girl at Slow Down Ranch—that old Mazarine was to receive six thousand dollars in cash from Orlando Guise by the hands of Burlingame! Only that very morning, at the moment of his own release from jail, his brother Bill McMahon had told him of the conversation overheard between Orlando and his mother, by Milly Gorst, the hired girl.

He turned and watched Mazarine go down the street and enter a barber's shop. If Mazarine was going to have his hair cut, he would be in the barber's shop for some time. With intense reflection in his eyes, McMahon entered Burlingame's office. He had come to settle up accounts for a clever piece of court-room work on the part of Burlingame. It was very well worth paying for liberally.

When he entered the office, Burlingame was not there. A clerk, however, informed him that Burlingame would be free within a few moments—and would he take a chair? Thereupon, the clerk left the room. McMahon took a chair—not the one towards which the clerk pointed him, but one beside the desk whereon were lying a number of open letters.

The interrogation always in the mind of a natural criminal prompted McMahon to take a seat near the open letters. As soon as the clerk left the room, a hairy hand reached out for the nearest letter, and a swift glance took in its contents.

A grimly cheerful, vicious smile lighted up the heavily bearded face. Placing the letter on the desk again, as soon as it was read, McMahon almost threw himself over to the chair at some distance from the desk, which the clerk had first offered him. There he sat with his elbows on his knees and his chin in his hands when Burlingame entered the room.

Ten minutes later, with a receipted bill in his pocket, Tom McMahon made for the barber's shop which Mazarine had entered. He found it full, but seated in the red-plush chair, tipped back at a convenient angle, was Mazarine undergoing the triple operations of shaving his upper lip, beard-trimming and hair-cutting. From that moment and for the rest of all the long day and evening, Joel Mazarine commanded the unvarying interest of two members of the McMahon family.

Orlando Guise had had a long day, but one that somehow made him whistle or sing to himself most of the time. In a way, half a lifetime had gone since the day before when he had first seen what he called to himself "the captive maid." He had never been so happy in his life; and yet he knew that he had not the faintest right to be happy. The girl who had so upset his self-control as to make him stumble on her doorstep was the wife of another man. It was, of course, silly to call him "another man," because he seemed a million miles away from any sphere in which Orlando lived. Yet he was another man;

and he was also the husband of the girl who had made Orlando feel for the very first time a strange singing in his veins. It actually was as though some wonderful, magnetic thing was making his veins throb and every nerve tingle and sing.

"It beats me," he said to himself fifty times that day.

He had never been in love. He did not know what it was like, except that he had seen it make men do silly things, just as drink did. He did not know whether he was in love or not. It was absurd that a man should be in love with a face at a window—a face with the beauty of a ghost rather than of a real live woman.

Orlando had little evil in his nature; his eyes did not look towards Tralee as did Burlingame's eyes. Nothing furtive stirred in Orlando's intensely blue eyes. Whatever the feeling was, it was an open thing, which had neither motive nor purpose behind it—just a thing almost feminine in its nature. As yet it was like the involuntary adoration which girls at a certain period of their lives feel successively for one hero after another. What it would become, who could tell? What would happen to the young girl adoring the actor, or the hero of the North Pole, the battle-field or the sea, if the adored one was not far off, but very near? Indeed, who could tell?

But, as it was, in the upper room where Louise sat all day looking out over the prairie, and on the prairie where business carried Orlando from ranch to ranch on this perfect day, no recreant thought or feeling existed. Each was a simple soul, as yet unspoiled and in one sense unsophisticated—the girl, however, with an instinctive caution, such as an animal possesses in the presence of a foe with which it is in truce; the man with an astuteness

which belonged to a native instinct for finding a way of doing hard things in the battle of life.

All day Orlando wondered when he should see that face again; all day the eyes of Louise pleaded for another look at the ranchman with the dress of a dandy, the laugh of a child, and the face of an Apollo—or so it seemed to her. It was the sort of day which ministers to human emotion, which stirs the sluggish blood, revives the drooping spirit. There was a curious, delicate blueness of the sky over which an infinitely more delicate veil of mist was softly drawn. At many places on the prairie the haymakers were loading the great wagons; here and there a fallow field was burning; yonder a house was building; cattle were being rounded up; and far off, like moving specks, ranchmen were climbing the hills where the wild bronchos were, for a day of the toughest, most thrilling sport which the world knows.

Night fell, and found Orlando making for the trail between what was known as the Company's Ranch and Tralee. To reach his own ranch, he had to cross it at an angle near the Tralee homestead. It was dark, with no moon, but the stars were bright.

As he crossed the Tralee trail, he suddenly heard a cry for help. Between him and where the sound came from was a fire burning. It was the camp-fire of some prairie pioneer making for a new settlement in the North; and beside it was a tent whose owner was absent in Askatoon.

Orlando dug heels into his horse and rode for the point from which the cry for help had come. Something was undoubtedly wrong. The voice was that of one in real trouble—a hoarse, strangled sort of voice.

As he galloped through the light of the camp-fire, a pistol-shot rang out, and he felt a sharp, stinging pain in his side. Still urging his horse, he cleared the little circle of light and presently saw a man rapidly mounting a horse, while two others struggled on the ground.

He dashed forward. As he did so, one of the men on the ground freed himself, sprang to his feet, mounted his horse, and was away into the night with his companion. Orlando slid to the ground beside the figure which was slowly raising itself from the ground.

"What's the matter? Are you all right? Have they hurt you?" he asked, as he stooped over and caught the shoulders of the victim of the two fleeing figures.

At that instant there were two more pistol-shots, and a bullet hit the ground beside Orlando. Then he saw dimly the face of the man whom he was helping to his feet.

"Mazarine! Good Lord—Mazarine!" he said in an anxious voice. "What have they done to you?"

"Nothing—I'm all right. The dogs, the rogues, the thieves—but they didn't get it! It was in the pockets of my shirt." The old man was almost hysterical. "You just come in time, Mr. Guise. You frightened 'em off. they'd have found it, if it hadn't been for you."

"Found what?" asked Orlando, as he helped the old man towards the camp-fire, himself in pain, and a dizziness coming over him.

"Found your six thousand dollars that Burlingame paid me to-day," gasped the old man, spasmodically; "but it's here—it's here!" He caught at his breast with devouring greed.

Somehow the agitated joy of the old man revolted Orlando. He had a sudden rush of repulsion; but he fought it down.

"Are you all right?" he asked. "Are you all right?" Somehow the sound of his own voice was very weak.

"Yes, I'm all right," Mazarine said, and he called to his horse near by.

The horse did not stir, and the old man, whose breath came almost normally now, moved over and caught its bridle.

In a dazed kind of way, and with growing unsteadiness, Orlando walked towards the camp-fire. He was leaning against his horse, and opening his coat and waistcoat to find the wound in his side and stanch it with the kerchief from his neck, when Mazarine came up.

"What's that on your coat and breeches? Say, you're all bloody!" exclaimed Mazarine. "Why, they shot you!"

"Yes, they got me," was Orlando's husky reply, and he gave a funny little laugh—giggling, people had called it.

"How are we going to get you home?" Mazarine asked. "You can't ride."

At that moment there was the rumbling jolt of a wagon. It was the pioneer-emigrant returning from Askatoon to his camp.

A few minutes later Orlando was lying on some bags in the emigrant's wagon, while Mazarine rode beside it.

"It's only a few hundred yards to the house," said the emigrant sympathetically, as he looked down at the now unconscious figure in the wagon.

"It's four miles to his house," said Mazarine.

"Well, I'm not taking him four miles to his house or any house," said the emigrant. "My horse has had enough to-day, and the sooner the lad's attended to the better. He's going to the nearest house, and that's Tralee, as they call it, just here."

"That's my house," gruffly replied the old man.

"Well, that's where you want him to go, ain't it?" asked the pioneer sharply. He could not understand the owner of Tralee.

"Yes, that's where I want him to go," replied Mazarine slowly and morosely.

"Then you ride ahead on the trail, and I'll follow," returned the other decisively.

"What's the matter? Who hurt him?" he presently called to Mazarine, riding in front.

"I'll tell you when we get to Tralee," answered the old man, with his eyes fixed on two lights in the near distance. One was in the kitchen, where a half-breed woman was giving supper to Li Choo, a faithful Chinaman roustabout; the other was in the room where a young wife sat with hands clasped, wondering why her husband did not return, yet glad that he did not.

CHAPTER VI

"THINGS MUST HAPPEN"

BETWEEN two sunrises Louise Mazarine had seen her old world pass in a flash of flame and a new world trembling with a new life spread out before her; had come to know what her old world really was. The eyes with which she looked upon her new world had in them the glimmer not only of awakened feeling but of awakened understanding. To this time she had endured her aged husband as a slave comes to bear the lashes of his master, with pain which will be renewed and renewed, but pain only, and not the deeper torture of the soul; for she had never really grasped what their relations meant. To her it had all been part of the unavoidable misery of life. But on that sunny afternoon when Orlando Guise's voice first sounded in her ears, and his eyes looked into hers as, pale and ill, she gazed at him from the window, a revelation came to her of what the three years of life with Joel Mazarine had really been. From that moment until she heard the pioneer's wagon, escorted by her husband, bringing the unconscious Orlando Guise to her door, she had lived in a dream which seemed like a year of time to her.

Since the early morning of that very day, when Joel had leaned over her bed and asked her in his slow, grinding voice how she was, she had lived more than in all the past nineteen years of her life. The Young Doctor had come and gone, amazed at first, but presently with a look of apprehension in his eyes. There was not much trace of yesterday's illness in the alert, eager

girl-wife, who twenty-four hours before had been really nearer to the end of all things than her aged husband. The Young Doctor knew all too well what the curious, throbbing light in her eyes meant. He knew that the gay and splendid Orlando Guise had made the sun for this prismatic radiance, and that the story of her life, which Louise had wished to tell him yesterday, would never now be told—for she would have no desire to tell it. The old vague misery, the ancient veiled torture, was behind her, and she was presently to suffer a new torture—but also a joy for which men and women have borne unspeakable things. No, Louise would never tell him the story of her life, because now she knew it was a thing which must not be told. Her mind understood things it had never known before. To be wise is to be secret, and she had learned some wisdom; and the Young Doctor wondered if the greater wisdom she must learn would be drunk from the cup of folly. Before he left her he had said to her with meaning in his voice:

"My dear young madam, your recovery is too rapid. It is not a cure—it is a miracle; and miracles are not easily understood. We must, therefore, make them understood; and so you will take regularly three times a day the powerful tonic I will give you."

She was about to interrupt him, but he waved a hand reprovingly and added with kindly irony:

"Yes, we both know you don't need a tonic out of a bottle; but it's just as well other people should think that the tonic bringing back the color to your cheeks comes out of a bottle and not out of a health resort, called Slow Down Ranch, about four miles to the northwest of Tralee."

As he said this, he looked straight into the eyes which

seemed, as it were, to shrink into cover from what he was saying. But when, an instant afterwards, he took her hand and said good-bye, he knew by the trembling clasp of her fingers—even more appealing than they had yet been—that she understood.

So it was a few moments later, outside the house, he had said to Joel Mazarine that he had given his wife a powerful tonic, and he hoped to see an almost instant change in her condition; but she must have her room to herself for a time, according to his instructions of the day before, as she was nervous and needed solitude, to induce sleep. He was then about to start for Askatoon when the old man said:

"I suppose you won't have to come again, as she's going on all right."

To this the Young Doctor had replied firmly: "Yes, I'm coming out to-morrow. She's not fit yet to go to Askatoon, and I must see her once again."

"Oh, keep coming—that's right, keep coming!" answered the miserly old man, who still was not so miserly that he did not want his young wife blooming. "Coming to-morrow, eh!" he added, with something very like a sneer.

The other had a sudden flash of fury pass through his veins. The old Celtic quickness to resent insult swept over him. The ire of his forefathers waked in him. This outrageous old Caliban, this ancient river-hog, to attempt a sneer at him! For an instant he was Kilkenny let loose, and then the cool, trained brain reasserted its mastery, and he replied:

"If there should be a turn for the worse, send for me to-night—not to-morrow!" And he looked the old man in the eyes with a steady, steely glance which had nothing

to do with the words he had just uttered, but was the challenge of a conquering spirit.

The Young Doctor had acted with an almost uncanny prescience. It was as though he had foreseen that Orlando Guise would be carried upstairs to a room nearly opposite that of Louise, and laid unconscious on a bed, till he himself should come again that very night and extract a bullet from Orlando's side; that he would open Orlando's eyes to consciousness, hear Orlando say, "Where am I?" and note his startled look when told he was at Tralee.

Once during this visit, while making Orlando safe and comfortable, with the help of Li Choo, the Chinaman, and Rada, the half-breed, he had seen Louise for a moment. The old man had gone to the stables, and as he came out of the room where Orlando was Louise's door opened softly on him. Dimly, in the half-darkness of her room, in which no light was burning, he saw her. She beckoned to him. Shutting the door of Orlando's bedroom behind him, he came quickly to her side and said:

"Go to bed at once, young woman. This will not do."

"I'm not sick now," she urged. "Say, I really am well again."

"You must not be well again so soon," he replied meaningly. "I want you to understand that you must not," he insisted.

There was a pause, which seemed interminable to the Young Doctor, who was listening for the heavy footstep of Joel Mazarine outside the house; and then at last in agitation Louise said to him:

"Will he get well? Rada told me he was shot saving Mr. Mazarine. Will he get well?"

"Yes, he will get well, and quickly, if——"

He broke off, for there was the thud of a heavy foot-

step for which he had been listening. Joel Mazarine was returning.

"Won't they let me help nurse him?" she whispered.

The Young Doctor shook his head in negation.

"His mother will be here to-morrow," he said quickly. "Be wise, my child."

"You understand?" she whispered wistfully.

"I have no understanding. Go to bed," he answered sharply. "Shut the door at once."

When old Joel Mazarine's footsteps were heard upon the staircase again, Orlando was lying with half-closed eyes, watching, yet too weak to speak; and the Young Doctor was giving directions to Rada and Li Choo for the night-watch in Orlando's room. When Mazarine entered, the Young Doctor gave him a casual nod and went on with his directions. When he had finished, Rada said in her broken English, with an accent half-Indian, half-French:

"His mother you send for—yes? She come queeck. Some one must take care him when for me get breakfus and Li Choo do chores."

"We'll send for her in the morning," interrupted Joel Mazarine.

"Perhaps Mrs. Mazarine would be well enough to help a little in the morning," remarked the Young Doctor in a colorless voice. He knew when to be audacious; or, if he did not know, he had an instinct; and he noticed that the wounded man's eyelids did not even blink when he threw out the hint concerning Louise, while the eyes of the old man took on a sudden flame.

"Mrs. Mazarine has to be molly-coddled herself—that's what you've taught her," he snarled.

"Well, then, send for Mrs. Guise to-night," commanded the Young Doctor.

He thought Joel Mazarine made unnecessary noise as he stamped down the staircase to send a farmhand to Slow Down Ranch; and he also thought that Orlando Guise showed discretion of manner and look in a moment of delicacy and difficulty. He knew, however, that, as the children say, "Things must happen."

CHAPTER VII

"THE ZOOLYOGICAL GARDEN"

PATSY KERNAGHAN regarded Tralee as a kind of Lost Paradise, for the most part because it had passed from the hands of a son of the Catholic Church into those of the "prayin' Methodys," as he called them, and also because he had a "black heart ag'in'" Joel Mazarine.

The spark was struck in him with some vigor one day at Tralee. It was caused by the flamboyant entrance of Mrs. Guise into the front garden, as the Young Doctor was getting into his buggy for the return journey to Askatoon, after attending Orlando, whose enforced visit to Tralee had already extended over a week.

"Aw, Doctor dear," said Patsy, as Orlando's mother fluttered into the garden like a gorgeous hen with wings outspread, her clothes a riot of contradictory colors, all of them insistently bright, "d'ye know what this place is —this terry firmy on which we stand, that's wan mile wan way, an' half a mile the other? Ye don't? Well, I'll tell ye: it's a zoolyogical gardin. Is it like a human bein' she is, the dear ould wumman there? Isn't she just some gay ould bird from the forests of the Equaytor, wherivir it is? Look at the beautiful little white curls hanging down her cheek, tied with ribbon—pink ribbon too—an' the bonnet on her head! Did ye iver see annything like it outside a zoolyogical gardin? Isn't it like the topknot of some fine old parakeet from Pernambukoko—and oh, Father Rainbow, the maginta dress of her! Now I tell you, Doctor dear, I tell you the truth, what I know! She wears hoops, she does, the same as y'r grandmother used to.

An' the bit of rose ribbon round her waist, hanging down behind—now I ask y'r anner, is it like a wumman at all? See the face of her, with the little snappin' eyes an' the yellow beak of a nose, an' the sunset in her cheeks that's put on wid a painter's brush! Look at her trippin' about! Floatin'—shure, that's what she's doin'! If you listened hard, you'd hear her buzzin'. It's the truth I tell ye. D'ye follow me?"

The Young Doctor liked talking to Patsy Kernaghan better than to any other person in Askatoon. He was always sure to be stimulated by a new point of view, but he never failed to provoke Kernaghan by scepticism.

"One wild bird from 'Pernambukoko' does not make a zoölogical garden, Patsy," he said with an air of dissent.

"Well, that's true for you, Doctor dear," answered Kernaghan, "but this gardin's got a bunch of specimens for all that. Listen to me now. Did you ever notice the likeness between the faces of people and of animals an' things that fly? You never did? Well, be thinkin' of it now. Ivry man and wumman here at Tralee looks like an animal or a bird in a zoolyogical gardin. Shure, there's no likeness between anny two of them; it's as if they was gathered from ivry corner of the wide wurruld. There's a Mongolian in the kitchen an' slitherin' about outside, doin' the things that's part for man and part for wumman. Li Choo they call him. Isn't his the face of a bald-headed baboon? An' the half-breed crature—she might ha' come from Patagony. An' the ould man Mazarine—part rhinoceros and part Methody, he is. An' what do ye be thinkin' of him they call Giggles, that almost guv his life to save the ould behemoth! Doesn't he remind you of the zebra, where the wild Hottentots come from—smart and handsome, but that showy, all stripes and tail

and fetlock! D'ye unnerstand what I mean, y'r anner?"

"Have you finished calling names, Kernaghan?" asked the Young Doctor in a low tone. "Have you really finished your zoölogical list?"

Kernaghan's eye flashed. "Aw, Doctor dear," said he, "manny's the time in County Inniskillen, where you come from, you've seen a wild thing, bare-footed, springin' from stone to stone on the hillside, wid her hair flyin' behind like the daughter of a witch or somethin' only half human—so belongin' to the hills an' the bogs an' the *cromlechs* was she. Well, that's the maid that's mistress of Tralee—belongin' as much to the Gardin of Eden as to this place here. There's none of them here that belongs. Every wan of them's been caught away from where he ought to be into this zoolyogical gardin."

"Well, there's one good thing about a zoölogical garden, Patsy Kernaghan," said the Young Doctor; "it's generally a safe place for the birds and animals in it."

"But suppose some wan—suppose, now, the Keeper got drunk and let loose the popylashin of the gardin upon each other, d'ye think would it be a Gardin of Eden?" Suddenly Patsy's manner changed. "Aw, I tell you this, then: I don't like what I see here, an' I like it less an' less ivry day."

"What don't you like, Patsy?" asked the other quizzically.

"I don't like the way the old fella watches that child he calls his wife. I don't like the young fella bein' the cause of the old man's watchin'."

"What has happened? What has he done?" asked the Young Doctor a little anxiously.

"Divils me own, it isn't what he's done; it's his bein' here. It's his bein' what he is. It doesn't need *doin'* to

bring wild youth together. Look at her, y'r anner! A week ago she was like wan that'd be called to the Land of Canaan anny minnit. Wasn't you here tendin' her, as if she was steppin' intil her grave, an' look at her now! She's like a rose in the garden, like a lark's lilt in the air. What has done it? The young man's done it. You'll be tellin' the ould fella it's the tonic you've guv her. Tonic! How long d'ye think he'll belave it?"

"But she never sees Mr. Guise, does she, Patsy? Isn't his mother always with him? Hasn't Mazarine forbidden his wife to enter the room?"

Kernaghan threw out his hands. "An' you're the man they say's the cleverest steppin' between Winnipeg and the Mountains—an'—an'—you talk to me like that! Is the ould fella always in the house? Is he always upstairs? I ask you now. I'll tell you this, y'r anner——"

The Young Doctor interrupted him. "Don't you suppose that there's somebody always watching, Patsy—the half-breed, the Chinaman?"

Kernaghan snapped a finger. "Aw, must I be y'r schoolmaster in the days of your dotage! Of coorse the ould fella has someone to watch, an' I dunno which it is—the Chinaman or the half-breed wumman. But I'll tell you this: they'll take his pay and lie to him about whatever's goin' on inside the house. That girl has them both in the palms of her hands. Let him set what spies he will, she'll do what she wants, if the young man lets her."

"His mother——" interjected the doctor.

"Her of the plumage—her! Shure, she's not livin' in this wurruld. She's only visitin' it. She's got no responsibility. If iver there was a child of a fairy tale, that wumman's the child. I belave she'd think her son was doin' right if he tied the ould fella up to a tree an' stuck

him as full of Ingin arrows as a pin-cushion, an' rode off with the lovely little lady in beyant there. That's my mind about her. It isn't on her you can rely. If ye want the truth, y'r anner, them two young people have had words together and plenty of them, whether it's across the hall—her room from his; or in his room; or through the windy or down the chimney—shure, I don't care! They've spoke. There's that between them wants watchin'. Not that there's wrong in aither of them—divil a bit! I've got me own mind about Mr. Orlando Giggles. As for her, the purty thing, she doesn't know what wrong is—that's the worst of it!"

The Young Doctor tapped Kernaghan's head gently with his whip. "Patsy," said he, "you talk a lot. There's no greater talker between here and Donegal. But still I think you know what to say and whom to say it to."

Kernaghan's cap came off. He ran his fingers through his hair and looked at the other with a primitive intelligence which showed him to be what the Young Doctor knew him to be—better than his looks, or his place in the world, or his reputation.

"Thank you kindly, y'r anner," he said softly. "I'm troubled about things here, I am. That's why I spoke to ye. I'm afraid of the old fella, for his place is not in the pen wid that young thing, an' he'll break her heart, or kill her, if he gets to know the truth."

"What do you mean by 'the truth,' Patsy?" was the sharp query.

"I mean nothin' at all, save that in there wild youth is spakin' to wild youth—honest and dacint and true. But there's manny a tragedy comes out of that, y'r anner."

"Orlando has been sitting up for two days," said the Young Doctor meditatively, "and in two days more he

can be removed. Patsy, you are staying on here. I know, and I trust you. The girl and the young man have both been my patients. I think as much of both of them as I can think of any man or woman. He's straight and——"

"But a girl's mad when the love-song rises in her heart," interjected Kernaghan.

"Yes, I know, Patsy, but it isn't so bad as you think. I had a talk with her to-day. Perhaps we can get him away to-morrow. Meanwhile, there can't much happen."

"Can't much happen, wid that ould wumman in the gardin there, an' the young wife upstairs, an' the fine young fella sittin' alone in his room achin' for the sound of her voice! Shure, they're together at this minnit, p'r'aps."

The Young Doctor tapped Kernaghan again on the head with his whip. "You're a wild Irishman still," he said, "but I think none the worse of you for that. Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof. Keep your head, Patsy." And, whipping up his horse, he nodded and drove on.

It may be that Kernaghan's instinct was no truer than his own. It may be the Young Doctor knew Kernaghan's instinct to be true; and it also may be that what Kernaghan thought possible, the Young Doctor thought possible; but he also felt that things must be as they must be.

In any case Kernaghan was right; for while the little flamboyant lady from Slow Down Ranch was busy in the front garden, Louise Mazarine was with her wounded guest, with the man who had saved her husband's money and perhaps his life. The wounded guest regarded his wound as a blessing almost. Perhaps that was why he did not notice that his host had only been silently grateful.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ORIENTAL WAY OF IT

ORLANDO GUISE'S mother was lacking in the caution which mothers generally have where their men-children are concerned. If she had had sense, she would have insisted on removing Orlando to Slow Down Ranch at the earliest possible moment, even at some risk to his physical well-being. She ought to have seen that Joel Mazarine was possessed of a jealousy as unreasoning as that of an animal; she ought to have discouraged Louise's kindnesses. If the kindnesses had been only the ordinary acts of a mistress of a house to a guest who had saved her husband's life—dishes made by her own hand, strengthening drinks, flowers picked and arranged by herself—there could have been no cause for nervousness. Each thing done by Louise, however, came from a personally and emotionally solicitous interest. It was to be seen in the glance of the eye, in the voice a little unsteady, in girlish over-emphasis, in that shining something in the face, which, in Ireland, they call the love-light.

So great was Mrs. Guise's vanity, so intense her content in her son, so proud was she of other people's admiration of him, no matter who they were, that she welcomed Louise's attentions. Kernaghan was wrong. Mazarine had not forbidden Louise to enter Orlando's room. That was the contradictory nature of the man. His innate savagery made him brood wickedly over her natural housewifely attentions to the man who had probably saved his own life, and certainly had saved him six thousand dollars; yet it was as though he must see the worst that might

happen, must even encourage a danger which he dreaded. When the Methodist minister from Askatoon came to offer prayer for Orlando, Joel joined in it with all the unction of a class-leader, while every word of the prayer trembled in an atmosphere of hatred. As Patsy Kernaghan said, he himself watched, and he paid the Chinaman to watch, in the vain belief that money would secure faithful service.

The Young Doctor had told him that his powerful medicine had brought back the bloom to his young wife's checks and the light to her eyes, but how much he believed he could not himself have said. One thing he did know: it was that Orlando seemed quite indifferent to everything except his mother, the state of the crops and the reports on his own cattle. Also Orlando had made a good impression when he resented, with a funny little oath and a funnier little giggle, but with some heat in his cheek, Joel's ostentatious proposal to pay the Young Doctor's bill for attendance.

The offer had been made when Louise was standing in the doorway; but the old man did not notice that Louise colored in sympathy with the flush in Orlando's face. It was as though a delicate nerve had been touched in each of them; but it was a nerve that had never been sensitive until they had met each other for the first time. Orlando's mother dealt with the situation in her own way. She said in a somewhat awkward pause, following the old man's proposal, that a doctor's bill was a personal thing, and she would as soon allow someone else to pay it as to pay for her washing. At this Orlando giggled again, and ventured the remark that no doctor could dispense enough medicine in a year to pay her laundry bill for a month—which pleased the old lady greatly and impelled her to swing her skirt kittenishly.

It was at this point that Li Choo came knocking at the open door with a message for Mazarine. It related to a horse-accident at what was known as One Mile Spring; and Mazarine, having frowned his wife out of the doorway, made his way downstairs and prepared for his short journey to the Spring. Before he left, however, he called Li Choo aside, and what he said caused Li Choo to answer: "Me get money, me do job. Me keep eyes open. Me tell you."

From a window Louise had watched the colloquy, and she knew, as well as though she stood beside them, what was being said. Li Choo had told the truth: he had got the cash, and he would do the job. But not alone from Joel Mazarine did he get money. Only two mornings before, Louise, for all the extra work he had had to do during Orlando's illness and without thought of bribery, had given him a beautiful gold ten-dollar-piece with a hole in it. If the piece had been minus the hole, Li Choo would have returned it to her, for he would have served her for nothing till the end of his days, had it been possible. Because there was a hole in it, however, and he could put a string through it and wear it around his neck inside his waistcoat, he took it, blinking his beady eyes at her; and he said:

"Me watch most petic'ler, mlissy. Me tell boss Mazaline ev'rything me see!" And he giggled almost as Orlando might have done.

After which Li Choo slip-slopped away to his work behind the kitchen. When he saw Orlando's mother in the garden and the Young Doctor drive to Askatoon, and Patsy Kernaghan mount an aged cayuse and ride off, he clucked with his tongue and then went into the kitchen and prepared a tray on which he placed several pieces of

a fine old set of china, which had belonged to Mazarine's grandmother and was greatly prized by the old man. Then he clucked to the half-breed woman, and she made ready as sumptuous a tea as ever entered the room of a convalescent.

Like a waiter at a seaside hotel, Li Choo carried the tray above his head on three fingers to the staircase, and as he mounted to the landing, called out, "Welly good tea me bling gen'l'man." This was his way of warning Orlando Guise, and whoever might be with him, of his coming.

He need not have done so, for though Louise was in Orlando's room, she was much nearer to the door than she was to Orlando. She hastened to place a table near to Orlando, for the tray which Li Choo had brought, and, as she did so, remarked with a shock at the cherished china upon the tray.

"Li Choo! Li Choo!" she gasped, reprovingly, for it was as though the Ark of the Covenant had been burgled. But Li Choo, clucking, slip-slopped out of the room and down the stairs as happy as an Oriental soul could be. What was in the far recesses of that soul, where these two young people were concerned, must remain unrevealed; but Li Choo and the half-breed woman in their own language—which was almost without words—clucked and grunted their understanding.

Left alone again, Louise found herself seated with only the table between herself and Orlando, pouring him tea and offering him white frosted cake like that dispensed at weddings; while Orlando chuckled his thanks and thought what a wonderful thing it was that a bullet in a man's side could bring the unexpected to pass and the heart's desire of a man within the touch of his fingers.

Their conversation was like that of two children. She talked of her bird Richard, which she had sent to him every morning that it might sing to him; of her black cat Nigger, which sat on his lap for many an hour of the day; of the dog Jumbo, which said its prayers for him to get well, for a piece of sugar—that was a trick Louise had taught it long ago. Orlando talked of his horses and of his mother—who, he declared, was the most unselfish person on the whole continent; how she only thought of him, and spent her money for him, and gave to him, never thinking of herself at all.

"She has the youngest heart of anyone in the world," said Orlando.

Louise did not even smile at that. No one with a heart that was not infantile could dress and talk as Orlando's mother dressed and talked; and so Louise said softly: "I am sure her heart is a thousand years younger than mine—or younger than mine was." And then she blushed, and Orlando blushed, for he understood what was in her mind—that until they two had met, she was, as the Young Doctor said, a victim of senile decay.

That was the nearest they had come as yet to saying anything which, being translated, as it were, through several languages, could mean love-making. Their love-making had only been by an inflection of the voice, by a soft abstraction, by a tuning of their spirits to each other. They were indeed like two children; and yet Li Choo was right when, in his dark soul, he conceived them to be lovers, and thought they would do what lovers do—hold hands and kiss and whisper, with never an end to a sentence, never a beginning.

It was not that these things were impossible to them. It was not that their beating pulses, and the throbbing in

them, was not the ancient passion which has overturned an empire, or made a little spot of earth as dear as Heaven above. It was that these were forbidden things, and Louise and Orlando accepted that they were forbidden.

How long would this position last? What would the future bring? This was only the fluttering approach of two natures, from everlasting distances. The girl had been roused out of sleep; from her understanding the curtains had been flung back so that she might see. How long would it last, this simple, unsoiled story of two lives?

Orlando reached out his hand to put his cup back upon the tray. As her own hand was extended to take it, her fingers touched his. Then her face flushed, and a warm cloud seemed to bedim her eyes. There flashed into her mind the deep, overwhelming fact that for three long years a rough, heavy hand had held her captive by day, by night, in a pitiless ownership. She got to her feet suddenly; her breath came quickly, and she turned towards the door as though she meant to go.

At that instant Li Choo slid softly into the room, caught up the tray, poised it on his three fingers over his head and said: "Old Mazarine, he come. Be queeck!"

They heard the heavy footsteps of Joel Mazarine coming into the hall-way just below.

The old man, as though moved by some uncanny instinct, had come back from One Mile Spring by a round-about trail. As the Chinaman came out upon the landing at the top of the stairs, Joel appeared at the bottom, in the doorway which gave upon the staircase. Two or three steps down shuffled the Chinaman; then, as it were by accident, he stumbled and fell, the tray with the beautiful china crashing down to the feet of Joel Mazarine, followed by the tumbling, chirruping Li Choo.

Oriental duplicity had made no wrong reckoning. The old man fell back into the hall-way from the crashing china and tumbling Oriental, who plunged out into the hall-way muttering and begging pardon, cursing his soul in good Chinese and bad English.

Looking down on the wreck, Mazarine saw his treasured porcelain shattered. With a growl of rage he stooped and seized Li Choo by the collar, flung him out of the door, and then with his heavy boot kicked him once, twice, thrice, a dozen times, anywhere, everywhere!

Li Choo, however, had done his work well. Joel Mazarine never knew the reason for the Chinaman's downfall on the stairway, for, in the turmoil, Louise had slipped away in safety. His rage had vented itself; but, if he had seen Li Choo's face an hour after, as he talked to the half-breed woman in the kitchen, he might have had some qualms for his cruel assault. Passion and hatred in the face of an Oriental are not lovely things to see.

CHAPTER IX

THE STARS IN THEIR COURSES

"It's been a great day—great."

Orlando Guise leaned lazily on the neck of the broncho he was riding, peering between its ears, over the lonely prairie, to the sunset which was making beautiful the western sky. It was as though there was a golden fire behind vast hills of mauve and pink, purple and saffron; but the glow was so soft as to suggest a flame which did not burn; which only shed radiance, color and an ethereal mist. All the width of land and life between was full of peace as far as eye could see. The plains were bountiful with golden harvest, and the activities of men were lost among the corn. Horses and cattle in the distance were as insects, and in the great concave sky stars still wan from the intolerant light of their master, the Sun, looked timidly out to see him burn his way down to the underworld.

"Great—but it might have been greater!" added Orlando, gazing intently at the sunset.

Yet, as he spoke, his eyes gazed at something infinitely farther away than the sunset—even to the goal of his desire. He was thinking that, great as the day had been, with all he had done and seen, it lacked a glimpse of the face he had not seen for a whole month. The voice—he had not heard it since it softly cried, "Oh, Orlando!" when the Chinaman crashed down the staircase with the tray of cherished porcelain, and had been maltreated by the owner of Trafee.

How many times since then had those words rung in

his ears! Louise had never called him by name save that once, and then it was the cry of a soul surprised, the wail of one who felt a heart-break coming on, the approach of merciless Fate. It was the companionship of trouble; it was the bird, pursued by a hawk, calling across the lonely valley to its mate. "Oh, Orlando!" He had waked in the morning with the words in his ears to make him face the day with hope and cheerfulness. It had sounded in his ears at night as he sat on the wide stoop watching the moon and listening to the night-birds, or vaguely heard his mother babbling things he did not hear.

It is a memorable moment for a man when he hears for the first time his "little name," as the French call it, spoken by the woman he loves. It is as the sound of a bell in the distance, a familiar note with a new meaning, revealing new things of life in the panorama of the mind. By those two words Orlando knew what was in the mind of Louise. They were a prayer for protection and a cry for comradeship.

When Louise first clasped hands with the Young Doctor on her arrival at Askatoon, the soft appeal of her fingers had made him understand that loneliness where she lived, and to bear which she sought help. But the "Oh, Orlando!" which was wrung from her, almost unknowingly, was the cry of one who, to loneliness, had added fear and tragedy. Yet behind the fear, tragedy and loneliness there was the revelation of a heart.

A courtship is a long or a short ceremonial or convention, a make-believe, by which people pretend that they slowly come to know and love each other; but lovers know that each understands the other by one note or inflection of the voice, by one little act of tenderness. These, or one of these, tell the whole story, the everlast-

ing truth by which men and women learn how good at its worst life is, or speak the lightning-lie by which the bones of a dead world are exposed to the disillusioned soul.

This had been a great day, because, in it, physical life had joyously celebrated itself in a wild business of the hills; in air so fresh and sweet that it almost sparkled to the eye; in a sun that was hot, but did not punish; at a sport by which the earliest men in the earliest age of the world made life a rare sensation. The man who has not chased the wild pony in the hills with the lasso on his arm, riding, as they say in the West "hell for leather," down the steep hillside, over the rock and the rough land, balancing on his broncho with the dexterity of a bird or a baboon, has failed to find one of life's supreme pleasures.

In the foothills, many miles away from Slow Down Ranch and Tralee, there lived a herd of wild ponies, and it had been the ambition of a dozen ranchmen and broncho-busters thereabouts to capture one or many. More than once Orlando had seen a little gray broncho, with legs like the wrists of a lady, with a tail like a comet, frisking among the rocks and the brushwood, or standing alert, moveless and alone upon some promontory; and he had made up his mind that if, and when, there came a day of broncho-busting, he would become a hunter of the little gray mare. When the news came that the ranchmen for miles around were preparing for the drive of the hills, he determined to take part in it, against the commands of the Young Doctor, who said that he would run risk in doing so, for, though his wound was healed, he should still avoid strain and fatigue.

There is no fatigue like that of broncho-busting. It is not galloping on the turf; it is being shaken and tossed in a saddle which the knees can never grip, on the back

of something gone mad—for the maddest, wisest, carefullest thing on earth is a broncho, which itself was once a wild pony of the hills, and has been hunted down, thrown by the lasso, saddled, bridled and heart-broken all in an hour. When the broncho which was once a wild pony sets out on the chase after its own, there is nothing like it in the world; and so Orlando found.

The veteran broncho-busters and ranchmen gave him no vociferous welcome as he appeared among them. Had it not been for the reputation which he had already gained for courage, such as he had shown in the recent affair when he had driven off the men who were robbing Joel Mazarine, and also for an idea, steadily spreading, that he was masquerading, and that behind all was a curly-headed, intrepid, out-door "white man," he would not have had what he called a great day.

He could not throw the lasso as well as many another, but he could ride as well as any man that ever rode; and the broncho given him to ride that day was one sufficiently unreliable in character (though sure-footed in travel) to test him to the utmost. He had endured the test; he had even got his little gray mare, lassoing her like a veteran. He had helped to break her, and had sent her home from the improvised corral by one of his men. He had then parted from the others, who had dispersed to their various ranches with their prizes, and had ridden away on the broncho with which he had done such a good day's work. He had had the thrill of the hunter, riding like any wild Indian through the hills; he had had the throb of conquest in his veins; but while other men had shouted and happily blasphemed as they rode and captured, he had only giggled in excitement.

As he looked now into the sunset, he was thinking of

the little gray mare, with the legs like the wrists of a lady and the soft, bright, wild eye, which had fought and fought to resist subjection; but which, overpowered by the stronger will of man, had yielded like a lady, and had been ridden away to Slow Down Ranch, its bucking over for ever, captive and subdued.

Orlando was picturing the little gray mare with Louise on its back. He had no right to think of Louise; yet there was never an hour in which he did not think of her. And Louise had no right to think of Orlando; yet, sleeping and waking, he was with her. Their homes were four miles apart, although, in one sense, they were a million miles apart by law and the convention which shuts a woman off from the love of men other than her husband; and yet in thought they were as near together always as though they had lain in the same cradle and grown up under the same roof-tree.

There was something about the gray pony, with the look of a captive in its eye, a wildness in subjection, like the girl at Tralee—the girl suddenly come to be woman, with her free soul born into understanding, yet who was as much a captive as though in prison, and guarded by a warder with a long beard, a carnivorous head, and boots greased with tallow.

Since they had parted, the day after Li Choo had averted a domestic "scene" or tragedy, the search had gone on by the mounted police—"the Riders of the Plains"—for the men who had attempted to rob Mazarine, and to put Orlando out of action by a bullet. Suspicion had been directed against the McMahons, but Joel Mazarine had declared that it was not the McMahons who had attacked him, although they were masked. There was nothing strange in that, because, as the Inspector of the

Riders said: "That lot is too fly to do the job themselves; you bet they paid others to do it."

Orlando had no wish to see the criminals caught or punished. Somehow, secretly, he looked upon the assault and his wound as a blessing. It had brought him near to his other self, his mate in the scheme of things. There was something almost pagan and primitive, something near to the very beginning of things in what these two felt for each other. It was as though they really belonged to a world of lovers that "lived before the god of Love was born."

As Orlando sat watching the sunset, Louise's last words to him, "Oh, Orlando!" kept ringing in his ears. He thought of what had happened that very morning before he started for the hills. Soon after daybreak, Li Choo the Chinaman had come slipslopping to him at Slow Down Ranch, and had said to him without any preliminaries, or any reason for his coming:

"I bling Mlissy Mazaline what you like. She cly. What you want me do, I do. That Mazaline, gloddam! I gloddam Mazaline!"

Orlando had no desire for intrigue, but Li Choo stood there waiting, and the devotion the Chinaman had shown made him tear a piece of paper from his pocket-book and write on it the one word *"Always."* He then folded the paper up until it was no bigger than a waistcoat button, and gave it to Li Choo. Also, he offered a five-dollar bill, which Li Choo refused to take. When he persisted, the Chinaman opened his loose blue jacket and showed a ten-dollar gold-piece on a string around his neck.

"Mlissy Mazaline glive me that; it all plenty me," he said. "You want me come, I come. What you say do, I do. I say, Gloddam Mazaline!"

That scene came to Orlando's mind now, and it agitated him as the incident itself had not stirred him when it happened. The broncho he was riding, as though the disturbance in Orlando's breast had passed into its own wilful body, suddenly became restless to be off, and, as Orlando gave no encouragement, showed signs of bucking.

At that moment Orlando saw in the distance, far north of both Tralee and Slow Down Ranch, a horse, ridden by a woman, galloping on the prairie. Presently, as he watched the headlong gallop, the horse came down and the rider was thrown. He watched intently for a moment, and then he saw that the woman did not move, but lay still beside the fallen horse.

He dug his heels into the broncho's side, and although it had done its day's work, it reached out upon the trail as though fresh from the corral. It bucked malevolently as it went, but it went.

It was apparent that no one else had seen the accident. Orlando had been at a point of vantage on a lonely rise about eighty feet above the level of the prairie. Where horse and rider lay was a good two miles, but within eight minutes he had reached the spot.

Flinging the bridle over the broncho's neck, he dismounted. As he did so, a cry broke from him. It was, as it were, an answer to the "Oh, Orlando!" which had been ringing in his ears. There, lying upon the ground beside the horse, with its broken leg caught in a gopher's hole, was Louise.

Orlando's ruddy face turned white; something seemed to blind him for an instant, and then he was on his knees beside her, lifting up her head, feeling her heart. Presently the color came back to his face with a rush. Her heart was beating; her pulse trembled under his fingers;

she was only unconscious. But was there other injury? Was arm or leg broken? He called to her. Then with an exclamation of self-reproach, he laid her down again on the ground, ran to his broncho, caught the water-bottle from the saddle, lifted her head, and poured some water between the white lips.

Presently her eyes opened, and she stared confusedly at Orlando, unable to realize what had happened. Then memory came back, and with it her very life-blood seemed to flow like water through the opening gates of a flume, with all the weight of the river behind. As her face flooded, she shivered with emotion. She was resting against his knee; her head was upon his arm; his face was very near; and there was that in his eyes which told a story that any woman, loving, would be thrilled at seeing. What restrained him from clasping her to his breast? What kept her arms by her side?

The sun was gone, leaving only a glimmer behind; the swift twilight of the prairie was drawing down. Warm currents of air were passing like waves of a sea of breath over the wide plains; the stars were softly stinging the sky, and a bright moon was asserting itself in the growing dusk. Here they were who, without words or acts, had been to each other what Adam and Eve were in the Garden, without furtiveness, and guiltless of secret acts which poison Love. What restrained them was native, childlike *camaraderie,* intense, unusual and strange. The world would call them romanticists, if they believed that this restraint could be. But there was something more. With all their frank childlikeness, there was also a shyness, a reserve, which would not have been, if either had ever eaten of the Fruit of Understanding until they met each other for the first time.

"Are you—are you hurt?" he asked, his voice calmer than his spirit, his heart beating terribly hard.

"I'm all right," she answered. "I fell soft. You see, I'm very light."

"No bones broken? Are you sure?" he asked solicitously.

She sat erect, drawing away from his arms and the support of his knee. "Don't you see my legs and arms are all right! Help me up, please," she added, and stretched out a hand.

Then, all at once, she saw the horse lying near. Again she shivered, and her hand was thrown out in a gesture of pain.

"Oh, see—see!" she cried. "His leg is broken."

She loved animals far more than human beings. There were good reasons for it. She had fared hard in life at the hands of men and women, because the only ones with whom, in her seclusion, she had had to do, had sacrificed her, all save one—the man beside her. Animal life had something in it akin to her own voiceless being. Her spirit had never been vocal until Orlando came.

"Oh, how wicked I've been!" she cried. . . . "I couldn't bear it any longer. *He* wouldn't let me ride alone, go anywhere alone. I had to do it. I'd never ridden this horse before. My own mare wasn't fit. See—see. It's my ankle that ought to be broken, not his."

Orlando got to his feet. "Look the other way," he said. "Turn round, please. I'll put him out of pain. He bolted with you, and he'd have killed you, if he could; but that doesn't matter. He can't be saved. Turn round, don't look this way."

She had been commanded to do things all her life, first by her mother, tyrant-hearted and selfish, and then by her

husband, an overlord, with a savage soul; and she had obeyed always, because she always seemed to be in the grasp of something against which no pressure could avail. She was being commanded now, but there was that in the voice which, while commanding her, made her long to do as she was bid. It was an obedience filled with passion, resigning itself to the will of a force which was all gentleness, but oh, so compelling!

She buried her face in her hands, and presently Orlando had opened a vein in the chestnut's neck, and its life-blood slowly ebbed away.

As he turned towards her again, Orlando was startled by a sudden action on the part of his broncho. Whether it was the smell of blood which frightened it, or death itself, which has its own terrors for animal life, or whether it was as though a naked, shivering animal soul passed by, the broncho started, shied and presently broke into a trot—then, before Orlando could reach it, into a gallop, and was away down the prairie in the direction of Slow Down Ranch.

"That's queer," he said, and he gave a nervous little laugh. "It's the worst of luck, and—and we're twelve miles from Tralee," he added slowly.

"It's terrible!" Louise said, her fingers twisting together in an effort at self-control. "Don't you see how terrible it is?" she asked, looking into Orlando's troubled face but cheerful eyes.

"You couldn't walk that distance, of course," he remarked.

She endeavored to get to her feet, but seemed to give way. He reached out his hands. She took them, and he helped her up. His face was anxious.

"Are you sure you're not hurt?" he asked.

"There's nothing broken," she answered. "No bones, anyway. But I don't feel——" She swayed. He put an arm around her.

"I don't feel as if I could walk even a mile," she continued. "It's shaken me so."

"Or else you're hurt badly inside," he said apprehensively.

"No, no, I'm sure not," she answered. "It's only the shock."

"Can you walk a little?" he asked. "This poor horse—let's get away from it. There's a good place over there—see!" He pointed to a little rise in the ground where were a few stunted trees and some long grass and shrubs. "Can you walk?"

"Oh, yes, I'm all right," she answered nervously. "I don't need your arm. I can walk by myself."

"I think not—well, not yet, anyhow," he answered soothingly. "Please do as you're told. I'm keeping my arm around you for the present."

Always in the past she had obeyed, when commanded by her mother or husband, with an apathy which had smothered her youth. Now her youth seemed to drink eagerly a cup of obedience—as though it were the wine of life itself. She even longed to obey the voice whispering in her soul from ever so far away: "Close—close to him! Home is in his arms."

With all her unconscious revelation of herself, however, there was that in her which was pure maidenliness. For, married as she was, she had never in any real sense been a wife, or truly understood what wifedom meant, or heard in her heart the call of the cradle. She had been the victim of possession, which had meant no more to her

than to be, as it were, subjected daily to the milder tortures of the Inquisition.

Yet she knew and could realize to the full that a power which had her in control, which possessed her by the rights of the law, prevented her—and would prevent her by whatever torture was possible—from friendship, alliance, or whatever it might be, with Orlando. She knew the law: one wife to one husband; and the wife to look neither to the right nor to the left, to the east nor to the west, to the north nor to the south, but to remain, and be constant in remaining, the helpmeet, the housewife, the sole property of her husband, no matter what that husband might be—vinous, vicious, vagrant, vengeful or any other things, good or bad.

"Why don't you look glad when you see me come in?" Joel Mazarine had remarked to her suddenly the day before.

"If you'd had some husbands, you might have reason for bein' the statue and the dummy you are. Am I a drunkard? Am I a thief? Am I a night-hawk? Do I go off lookin' for other women? Don't I keep the commandments? Ain't you got a home here as good as any in the land? Didn't I take you out of poverty, and make you head of all this, with people to wait on you and all the rest of it?"

That was the way he had talked, and somehow she had not seemed able to bear it; and she had said to him, in unexpected revolt, that her tongue was her own, and what was in her mind was her own, even if her body wasn't.

Then, in a fury, he had caught his riding-whip from the wall to lash her with it, just when Li Choo the Chinaman appeared with a message which he delivered at the appro-

priate moment, though he had had it to deliver for some time. It was to the effect that the clerk of the court in the neighboring town of Waterway wished to see him at once on urgent business. The message had been left by a rancher in passing.

As Li Choo delivered the word, he managed to put himself between Mazarine and his wife in such a way as to enrage the old man, who struck the Chinaman twice savagely across the shoulders with the whip, and then stamped out of the house, invoking God to punish the rebellious and the heathen, while Li Choo, shrinking still from the cruel blows, clucked in his throat. There was something in the sound which belonged to the abyss dividing the Eastern from the Western races.

That night Louise had refused to go to bed; but at last, fearing physical force, had obeyed, and had lain with her face to the wall, close up to it, letting the cold plaster cool her hot palms, for now she burned with a fire which was consuming the débris of an old life—the fire of knowledge, for which she had to pay so heavily.

"You couldn't walk even a little of the way to Tralee, could you?" asked Orlando, when they had reached a shrub-covered hillock.

"No, I couldn't walk it, I'm so shaken. I'm terribly weak; I tremble all over," she added, as she sat down upon a stone. "But if I don't—if I don't go back—oh, you know!"

"Yes, I know," answered Orlando. "He's the sort that would horsewhip a woman."

"He started to do it yesterday," she answered, "but Li Choo came in time, and he horsewhipped Li Choo instead."

"I wouldn't myself be horsewhipping Chinamen much," said Orlando. "They're a queer lot."

Suddenly she got to her feet. "I won't stand it. I won't stand it any longer," she cried. "That is why to-day, although he told me I mustn't ride, I took that new chestnut, and saddled it and rode—I didn't care where I rode. I didn't care how fast the horse went. I didn't care what happened to me. And here I am, and—— But oh, I do care what happens to me!" she added, her voice breaking. "I'm—I'm frightened of him —I'm frightened, in spite of myself. . . . He doesn't treat me right," she added. "And I'm terribly frightened."

She raised her eyes to Orlando's face in the growing dusk—there is no twilight in that prairie land—and there was that in it which made her feel that she must not give way any further. In Orlando's veins was Southern sap, mixed with Northern blood; in Orlando's eyes was a sudden look belonging to that which defies the law.

"Don't—don't look like that," she exclaimed. "Oh, Orlando!"

Once more he heard her speak his name, and it was like salve to a wound. He put a hand upon himself.

"I'll go to Tralee," he said, "if you don't mind waiting here alone."

"I can't. I will not wait alone. If you go, then I'll go too somehow. . . . It's twelve miles. You couldn't get there till midnight, and you couldn't get back here with a wagon for another couple of hours from that. It would be daylight then. I can't stay here alone. I'm frightened, and I'm cold."

"Wait a minute," said Orlando.

He ran back to the dead horse, unloosed the saddle

from its back, detached from it a raincoat strapped to the pommel, and brought it to her.

"This will keep you warm," he said. "It isn't cold to-night. You only feel cold because you're upset and nervous."

"I'm frightened," she answered; "frightened of everything. Listen! Don't you hear something stirring—there!" She peered fearfully into the dusk behind them.

"Probably," he answered. "There are lots of prairie dogs and things about. The more you listen, the more you hear on the prairie, especially at night."

There was silence for a moment, and then he added: "My broncho'll steer straight for Slow Down Ranch, and that'll bring my men. You can be quite sure there'll be a search-party out from Tralee, too, at the first streak of dawn. You can't make the journey, so the only thing to be done is to wait here. That coat will keep you from getting cold, and I'll cut a lot of long grass and make you a bed here. Also, the grass is warm, and I'll cover you with it and with pine branches."

"I can't lie down," she answered. "No, I can't; I'm afraid. It's all so strange, and to-morrow, he——"

"There's nothing to be frightened about," he interrupted. "Nothing at all, Louise."

It was the first time he had ever addressed her by name, and it made her shiver with a new feeling. It seemed to tell a long, long story without words.

"You must do what I ask you to do—whatever I ask you to do," he repeated. "Will you?"

"Yes, anything you ask me I'll do," she answered, and then added quickly, "for you won't ask me to do anything I don't want to do. That's the difference. You understand, Orlando."

A few minutes later he had found a suitable place to make a kind of bed of grass for her, and had prepared it, with his knife, cutting the branches of small shrubs and grass and the scanty branches of the pine. When it was finished, he came to her and said:

"It's all ready. Come and lie down, and I'll cover you up."

She got to her feet slowly, for she was in pain greater than she knew, so absorbed was her mind in this new life suddenly enveloping her, and then she said in a low voice: "No, not yet; I can't yet. I want to sit here. I've never felt the night like this before. It's wonderful, and I'm not nearly so cold now. I know I oughtn't to be cold at all, in the middle of summer like this."

She paused, and seemed lost in contemplation of the sky. After a moment she added: "I never knew I could feel so far away from all the world as I do to-night. But the sky seems so near, and the moon and the stars are so friendly."

"You haven't slept out of doors as I have hundreds of times," he answered. "The night and I are brothers; the stars are my little cousins; and the moon"—he giggled in his boyish way—"is my maiden aunt. She's so prudish and so kind and friendly, as you say. She's like an aunt I had—Aunt Samantha. She was my father's sister. I used to love her to visit my mother. She always brought me things, and she gave them to me as if they were on silver dishes—like a ceremony. She was so prim, I used to call her Aunt Primrose. She made me feel as if I could do anything I liked and break any law I pleased. But all the time, like a saint in a stained-glass window, she always seemed to be saying, 'Yes, you'd like to, but

you mustn't.' She was just like the moon. I'm well acquainted with the moon, and——"

"Hush!" Louise interrupted. "Don't you hear something stirring—there, behind us."

He laughed. "Of course something's always 'stirring behind us' on the prairie, and things you can't hear at all in the day are almost loud at night. There are thousands of sounds that never get to your ears when the sun is busy, but when Aunt Primrose Moon is saying, 'Hush! Hush!' to the naughty children of this world, you can hear a whole new population at work, cracking away like mad. Say, ain't I letting myself go to-night?" he added, giggling again and sitting down beside her. "I'm going to give you just half an hour, and at the end of that half-hour you've got to lie down and go to sleep."

"I can't—I can't," she said scarcely above a whisper.

As though in response to an unspoken thought, he said casually: "I'm going to walk awhile when you've lain down, and then——" He pointed to a spot about twenty yards away. "Do you see the two big stones there? Well, when I've finished my walk and my talk with Aunty Primrose"—he laughed up at the moon—"I'm going to sit down there and snooze till daylight." He pointed again: "Right over there beside those two rocks. That's my bed. Do you see?"

She did not reply at once, but a long sigh came from her lips. "You'll be cold," she said.

"No, it's a hot night," he answered. "I'm too hot as it is." And he loosened his heavy red shirt at the throat.

"If I've got to go to bed in half an hour," she said presently, "tell me more about your Aunt Samantha, and about yourself, and your home before you came out here,

and what you did when you were a little boy—tell me everything about yourself."

She was forgetting Tralee for the moment, and the man who had raised his hand against her yesterday, and the life she had lived. Or was it only that she had grown young during these last two months, and the young can so easily forget!

"You want to hear? You really want to hear?" he asked. "Say, it won't be a very interesting story. Better let me tell you about the broncho-busting to-day."

"No, I want to hear about yourself," she said. She looked intently at him for an instant, and then her eyes closed and the long lashes touched her cheek. There was something very wilful in her beauty, and her body too had delicate, melancholy lines strange in one so young. She was not conscious that, in her dreamy abstraction, she was leaning towards him.

It was but an instant, though it seemed to him an interminable time, in which he fought the fierce desire to clasp her in his arms, and kiss the lips which, to his ears, said things more wonderful than he had ever dreamed of in his friendship with the night and the primrose moon. He knew, however, that if he did she would not go back to Tralee to-morrow; that to-morrow she would defy the leviathan; and that to-morrow he would not have the courage to say the things he must say to the evil-hearted master of Tralee, who, he knew, would challenge the happenings of this night with ugly accusations. He must be able to look old Mazarine fearlessly in the face; he would not be the slave of opportunity. He was going to fight clean. She was here beside him in the warm loneliness of the northern world, and he was full-grown

in body and brain, with all the human emotions alive in him; yet he would fight clean.

Not for a half-hour, but for nearly an hour he told her what she wished to know, while she listened in a happy dream; and when at last she lay down, she refused his coverlet of dry grass, saying that she was quite warm. She declared that she did not even need the coat he had taken from the saddle of the dead horse, but he wrapped it around her, and, saying "Good-night" almost brusquely, marched away in the light of the dying moon.

The night wore on. At first Louise's ears were sensitive to every sound, and there were stirrings in the hillock by which she slept, but she comforted herself with the thought that they were the stirrings of lonely little waifs of nature like herself. Though she dared not let the thought take form, yet she feared, too, the sound of human footsteps. By and by, however, in the sweet quiet of the night and the somnolent light of the moon, sleep captured her. When at last Orlando's footsteps did crush the dry grass, the sound failed to reach her ears, for it was then not very far from daylight, and she had slept for several hours. Sleep had not touched Orlando's eyes when, sitting down by the stones which were to mark his resting-place, he waited for Louise to wake.

CHAPTER X

THE MOON WAS NOT ALONE

Out on the prairie under the light of the stars a man had fought the first great battle of his life, and had emerged victorious. There are no drawn battles in the struggles of the soul. As Orlando fought, he was tortured by the thought that none would believe the truth tomorrow when it was told; and that there would be penalty though there was no crime.

As for Louise, she could have returned, almost blindly defiant, to her world, hand in hand with Orlando; and yet, when morning came, and her eyes opened on the prairie at daybreak, with life stirring everywhere, she was glad of the victory—though the shadow of a great trouble to come was showing in her eyes.

She knew what she had to face at Tralee, and that she had no proof of her perfect innocence. It was of little use for them to call upon Heaven to witness what the night had been; and Joel Mazarine, who distrusted every man and woman, would distrust her with a stark sternness which guilt only could effectively defy!

Orlando's enforced gaiety as he invited her to a breakfast of a couple of biscuits, left from yesterday's bronchobusting, heartened her; yet both were conscious of the make-believe. They realized that they were helpless in the grip of harsh circumstance. It was almost enough to make them take advantage of calumny and the traps set for them by Fate, and join hands for ever.

As they looked into each other's eyes, the same hopeless yet reckless thought flickered—flickered, and vanished.

Yet as they looked out over the prairie towards Tralee, to which Louise must presently return, a rebellious sort of joy possessed them.

The discord of their thoughts was like music beside what had passed at Tralee. There nothing relieved the black, sullen rage of Joel Mazarine. He had returned to the house where his voice had always been able to summon his slaves, and to know that they would come—Chinaman, half-breed, wife. Now he called, and the wife did not come. On the new chestnut she had ridden away on the prairie, so the half-breed woman had said, as hard as he could go. He had scanned the prairie till night came, without seeing a sign of her.

His black imagination instantly conceived the worst that Louise might do. It was not in him ever to have the decent alternative. He questioned the half-breed woman closely; he savagely interrogated the Chinaman; and then he declared that they lied to him, that they knew more than they said; and when he was unable to bear it any longer he mounted his horse and galloped over to Slow Down Ranch. As he went, he kept swearing to himself that Louise had flown thither; and, like some fell disease, anger made his brain malignant. He could scarcely frame his words intelligibly when he arrived at Slow Down Ranch.

There he was presently convinced that his worst suspicions were true, for Orlando also had not returned. He saw it all. They had agreed to meet; they had met; they had eloped and were gone! His long upper lip was like some ravening thing of the sea; his beady eyes were those of serpents watching for the instant to strike, and his words burst over the head of Orlando's mother like shrapnel.

For once, however, the futile, fantastic mother rose higher than herself, and declared that her son had never run away from, or with, anything in his life; that he—Joel Mazarine—had never had anything worth her son's running away with; and that her son, when he came back, would make him ask forgiveness as he had never asked it of his God.

Indeed, the gaudy little lady stood in her doorway and chattered her maledictions after him, as he rode back again towards Tralee muttering curses which no class leader in the Methodist Church ought even to quote for pious purposes.

Joel Mazarine had flattered himself that he had everything life could give—money, property and a garden of youth in which his old age could loiter and be glad; and that he should be defied suddenly and his garden made desolate, that the lines of his good fortune should be crossed, caused him to rage like any heathen. His monstrous egotism made him like some infuriated bull in the arena, with the *banderillos* sticking in his hot hide.

The two people whom he cursed were in Elysium compared to the place where he tortured himself. There are desert birds that silently surround a rattlesnake, as he sleeps, with little bundles of cactus-heads and their million needles, so that, when the reptile wakes, it cannot escape through the pallisade of bristling weapons by which it is surrounded; and in ghoulish anger it strikes its fangs into its own body until it dies. Just such a helpless rage held Joel Mazarine, and his religion did not suggest seeking comfort at that Throne of Grace to which he had so publicly prayed on occasions.

Night held him prowling in his own coverts; morning found him yellow and mottled, malicious, but now silent.

"I'M YOUR WIFE BY THE LAW"

Then he added with sharp insistence and menace: "Stand back—damn you, Mazarine!"

Orlando did not move as he spoke, but there was a look in his face which an enemy would not care to see.

Mazarine, in spite of his rage, quailed before the sharp, menacing voice so little in tune with its reputation for giggling, and stepping back he let Louise pass. Then he plunged forward out of the doorway.

"That's right. Come outside," said Orlando scornfully. "Come out into the open." His voice became lower. There was something deadly in it, boy as he was. "Come out, you hypocrite, and listen to what I've got to say. Listen to the truth I've got to tell you. If you don't listen, I'll horsewhip you, that'd horsewhip a woman, till you can't stand—you loathsome old dog. . . . Yes, he took his horsewhip to her yesterday," he added to the spectators, who muttered angrily, for the West is chivalrous towards women.

Something near to madness possessed Orlando. No one had ever seen him as he was at that moment. Down through generations had come to him some iron thing that suddenly revealed itself in him, as something had just suddenly revealed itself in Louise.

The other three men—two in the wagon and one beside his horse—stared at him as though they now saw him for the first time. They were unready for the passion that possessed him. Not a muscle of his body appeared to move; he was as motionless as the trunk of a tree. But in his eyes and his voice there was, as one of the ranchers said afterwards, "hell—and then some more."

"Listen to me," he said again, and his voice was low and husky now. "Yesterday I was broncho-busting——"

Thereupon he told the whole story of what had hap-

pened since he had seen Louise thrown from her chestnut on the prairie. He told how Louise was too shaken and ill to attempt the journey back to Tralee, and how they had camped where they were, near the dead horse.

As Orlando talked, the old man was seized by terrible hatred and jealousy. "You needn't tell me the rest," he broke in, his hands savagely opening and shutting. "I guess I understand everything."

The words had scarcely left his mouth when from the wagon a man said: "Wait—wait, Mister. I got something to say."

He sprang to the ground, and ran between Mazarine and Orlando.

"This is where I come in," he said, as Louise's face appeared at an upper window, and she listened. "You don't know me. Well, I know you. Everybody knows you, and nobody likes you. I know what happened last night. I'm a brother of your fellow Christian Rigby, the druggist, over there in Askatoon. He's a Methodist. I'm not. I'm only good. I been a lot o' things, and nothing in the end. Well, you hearken to my tale.

"I was tramping with my swag on my back acrost the prairie to Askatoon from Waterway. I'm a sundowner. When the sun goes down, I down to my bed wherever I be on the prairie. I was asleep—I'd been half drunk—when the chestnut threw your wife and broke its leg; but I was awake when he rode up." He pointed to Orlando. "I was awake, and so I watched. I knew who she was; I knew who he was." He pointed to Orlando again. "I guessed I'd see something. I did.

"I watched them two people all night. There was a moon. I could see. I wasn't fifteen feet from her all night, and I jined the others when they come to rescue.

I guess I got the truth, and I guess if you want any evidence about me you can get it. Lots of people know me out here. I ain't got any house or any home, and I get drunk sometimes, and I ain't got money to buy meals with, lots of times, but nobody ever knowed me lie. That's what ruined me—I been too truthful. Well, I'm not lying now, Mister. I'm telling you the God-help-me truth. He's a gentleman." He pointed again to Orlando. "He's a gentleman from away back in God's country, wherever that is, and she's the best of the best of the very best.

"You can bet your greasy old boots and ugly face that you've got a bigger fortune in that wife of yours than you've any right to. Say, she's a queen, Mister, and don't you forget it, and"—he drawled out his words—"you go inside your house and get down on your knees, same as you do in the Meeting House, and thank the Lord you love so well for all his blessings. As my friend here said a little while back"—he pointed to Orlando again—"'Damn you, Mazarine!' Go and hide yourself."

The old man stood for a moment dumbfounded; then, without a word, he turned and hunched inside the house.

"He raised his horsewhip ag'in' a woman, did he?" said one of Orlando's ranchmen. "Ain't that a matter we got to take notice of?"

"Boys," said Orlando as he motioned them to be off, "Mrs. Mazarine can take care of herself. You'll forget what's happened, if you want to play up to her. If she needs you, she'll be sure to let you know."

A moment afterwards they were all on their way on the road leading to Slow Down Ranch.

"He didn't giggle much that time," said one of the ranchmen of Orlando, as they moved on.

CHAPTER XI

LOUISE

THE Young Doctor had had a trying day. Certain of his cases had given him anxiety; his drives had been long and fatiguing; he had had little sleep for several nights; and he was what Patsy Kernaghan had called "brittle"; for when Patsy was in a vexed condition, he used to say, "I'm so brittle I'll break if you look at me." As the Young Doctor drew his chair up to the supper-table and looked at his food with a critical air, he was very brittle.

For one born in Inniskillen he had an even nature, but its evenness was more the result of mental control than temperament. He sighed as he looked at the marrow bones which, as a rule, gave him joy when their turn came in the weekly menu; he eyed askance the baked potatoes; and the salad waiting for his skilled hand only gave him an extra feeling of fatigue.

Most men in a like state say, "I don't know what's the matter with me," and yet many a one has been stimulated out of it, away from it, by the soft voice and friendly hand of a woman.

There was, however, no woman to distract the overworked Young Doctor by her freshness, drawn from the reservoir of her vitality; and that was a pity, because, as Patsy Kernaghan many a time said: "Aw, Doctor dear, what's the good of a tongue to a wagon if there's only wan horse to draw it! Shure, you'll think a lot more of yourself whin you're able to stand at the head of your own table and say grace for two at least, and thanksgiving for manny, if it's the will of God."

The Young Doctor did not know why he was so brittle, but the truth is he was feeding on himself, and that is a poor business. Every dog knows it is good to feed on the knuckle of a goat if he hasn't got a beef-bone, and every real man knows—though to know anything at all he must have been married—that any marriage is better than no marriage at all; because, whether it's happy or unhappy, it makes you concerned for someone besides yourself, if you have any soul or sense at all.

The Young Doctor was under the delusion that he loved his lonely table and the making of a simple salad for a simple man, but then he came from Ireland and had imagination; and that is always a curse when it isn't a blessing, for there is nothing between the two. At the end of his troubled day he almost cursed the salad as it crinkled in the dish just slightly rubbed with garlic. He was turning away in apathy from it—from the bones with the marrow oozing out of the ends, from the bursting baked potatoes, from the beautiful crusts of brown bread, when he heard the door-bell ring. At the sound his face set as though it were mortar. He wanted no patients this night; but from the peremptory sound of the bell he was sure someone had come who needed medicine or the knife, and he could refuse neither; for was he not at everybody's beck and call, the Medicine Man whose door was everybody's door?

"Damnation!" he said aloud, and turned towards the door expectantly.

Then he bitted himself to wait; and he did not wait long. Presently he heard a voice say, "I must see him," and the door opened wide, and Louise Mazarine stepped into the room. Her face was pale and distraught; her blue eyes, with their long, melancholy lashes, stared at

him in appealing apprehension. Her lips were almost white; her hands trembled out towards him.

"I've come—I've come!" she said. It had the finality of the last chapter of a book.

The Young Doctor closed the door, ignoring for the instant the hands held out to him. After all, he was a very sane Young Doctor, and he had the faculty of keeping his head, and his heart, and his own counsel. Also he knew there was an inquisitive old servant in the hallway.

When the door was closed, he turned round on Louise slowly, and then he held out his hands to her, for she was shrinking away, as though he had repulsed her. He pressed her trembling hands in the way that only faithful friendship shows, and said:

"Yes, I know you've come, but tell me what you've come for."

"I couldn't bear it any longer," she said brokenly. "I'm not made of steel or stone. It's been terrible. He doesn't speak to me except to order me to do this or that. I haven't done anything wrong, and I won't be treated so. I won't! When he made me kneel down by him in the trail and tried to make me pray to be forgiven for my sins, I couldn't stand it. I don't know what my sins are, and I won't be converted if I don't want to. I'm not a slave. I'm of age. I'm twenty."

There was no sign of fatigue now in the Young Doctor's face. Something had called him out of himself, and this human need had done what a wife's hand might have done, or the welcome of a child.

"No, you're not twenty," he declared, with a friendly smile. "You aren't ten. You are only one. In fact, I think you're only just born!"

He did not speak as lightly as the words read. In his voice there was that compassionate irony with which men

shield those for whom they care. It means protection and defence. Somehow she seemed to him like a small bird on its first flight from the nest, or, as Patsy Kernaghan would have said, "A tame lamb loose in a zoolyogical gardin."

"So, because you won't pray and can't bear it any longer, you run away from him, and come to me!" the other remarked with a sorry smile, pouring out a glass of wine from a decanter that stood on the table.

"Drink this," he said presently, pushing her down gently into a chair with one hand and holding the glass to her lips. "Drink it every drop. As I said, you've only run away from one master to fall into another master's hands. You're a wicked girl. Drink it—every drop. . . . That's right."

He took the empty glass from her, put it on the table, and then stood and looked at her meditatively, fastening her eyes with his own. More than her eyes were fastened, however. Her mind was also under control; but that was because she believed in him so.

"Yes, you're a wicked girl," he said decisively.

She shuddered and shrank back. In her eyes was a helpless look, very different from that which she had given not so many days before when, with Orlando Guise behind her, she had defied her aged husband in his doorway, and her defiance had moved him from her path. Then she had been inspired by the fact that the man she loved was near her, that she had been wrongfully accused and was ready to fight. Afterwards, however, when she was alone, the sterile presence of Joel Mazarine, his merciless eyes, his hopeless religious tyranny, had worn upon her as his past violence had never done.

"Wicked!" Did this man, then, believe her guilty? Did he, of all men, think that the night upon the prairie

alone with Orlando had been her undoing? Had not the brother of Rigby the chemist borne witness with his own eyes to her complete innocence? If the Young Doctor disbelieved, then indeed she was undone.

"You don't think that of me—of me!" she gasped, her lips all white again. She got to her feet excitedly. "You shall not believe it of me."

"No, I did not say I believed *that*," the other remarked almost casually. "But if I did believe it, I don't know that it would make much difference to me. Fate, or God Almighty, or whatever it was, had stacked the cards against you. When I said it was wicked, I meant you did wrong in rushing away from your husband and coming to me. I suppose you have definitely left your husband—eh? You've 'left' him, as they say?"

He had an incorrigible sense of humor, as well as an infinite common sense. He wanted to break this spell of tense emotion which possessed her. So he pursued a new course.

"Don't you think it's rather hard on me?" he continued. "I'm a lone man in this house, with only one old woman to protect me, and I'm unmarried. I've a reputation to lose, and there are lots of mothers and daughters hereabouts. Besides, a medical practice is hard to get and not easy to keep. What do you mean by making a refuge of me, when there's nothing for me in it, not even the satisfaction of going into the divorce court with you? You wicked Mrs. Mazarine!"

"Oh, don't speak like that!" Louise interjected. "Please don't. Don't scold me. I had to come. I was going mad."

The Young Doctor had the case well in hand. He had eased the terrible tension; he was slowly reducing her to the normal. It was the only thing to do.

"What did Mazarine do or say to you that made you run away? Come now, didn't you first make up your mind to go to Slow Down Ranch—to Orlando?"

She flushed. "Yes, but only for a minute. Then I thought of you, because I knew you could help me as no one else could. Everybody believes in you. But then Li Choo——"

"Oh, Li Choo! So Li Choo comes into this, eh? So he said fly to Orlando, eh? Well, that's what he would do. But why Li Choo—a Chinaman? Tell me, what does Li Choo know?"

Quickly she told him the story of the day when Joel Mazarine had almost surprised her in Orlando's room; how Li Choo had saved the situation by falling down the staircase with the priceless porcelain, and how Mazarine had kicked him—"manhandled" him, as they say in the West.

"Chinamen don't like being kicked, especially Chinamen of Li Choo's station," remarked the Young Doctor meditatively. "You don't know, of course, that Li Choo was a prince or a bigbug of some sort in his own country. Why he left China I don't know, but I do chance to know that if another Chinky meets Li Choo carrying a basket on his shoulders, or a package in his hand, he kow-tows, and takes it away from him, and carries it himself. . . . No, I don't know why Li Choo is here in Askatoon, or why he's such a slave to Mrs. Mazarine; but I do know that he's a different-looking man when a Chinky runs up against him than when he's choring at Tralee. A sick Chinaman told me only a week ago that Li Choo was 'once big high boss Chinaman in Pekin.' . . . And so the mandarin advised you to fly to Orlando, did he? I wonder if it's a way they have in China."

"But I wouldn't go. I've come to you—Patsy Kernaghan brought me," Louise urged.

"Yes, I see you've come to me," remarked the Young Doctor dryly, "and you've stayed about long enough for me to feel your pulse and diagnose your case. And now you're going back with Patsy Kernaghan to your own home."

She trembled; then she seemed to strengthen herself in defiance. What a change it was from the child of a few weeks ago—indeed, of a few moments ago! The same passionate determination which seized her when she faced Mazarine with Orlando, possessed her again. With her whole being palpitating, she said: "I will not go back. I will not go back. I will kill myself first."

"That would be a useless sacrifice of yourself and others," the Young Doctor answered quietly. Seeing that the new thing in her was not to be conquered in a moment, he quickly made up his mind what to do.

"See," he continued, "you needn't go back to Tralee to-night, but you're not going to stay here, dear child. I'll take you over to Nolan Doyle's ranch, to Mrs. Doyle. You'll spend the night there, and we'll think about to-morrow when to-morrow comes. You certainly can't stay here. I'm not going to have it. Bless you, you're neither so young nor so old as all that!"

Suddenly he grasped both her arms and looked her in the face. "My dear young lady," he said gently, "I'm not your only friend, but I'm a stout friend—so stout that there isn't a mount can carry us both together. When you ride, I walk; when I ride, you walk—you understand? We don't walk or ride together. I'm taking care of you. Your life is too good to be ruined by rashness. You're in a 'state,' as my old housekeeper would say, but you'll be all right presently. As soon as I've made a salad, and

had a marrow-bone, you and I and Patsy Kernaghan are going to Nolan Doyle's ranch. . . . My dear, you must do what I say, and if you do, you'll be happy yet. I don't see how, quite, but it is so; and meanwhile, you mustn't make any mistakes. You must play the game. And now come and have some supper."

She waved her hand in protest. "I can't eat," she said. "Indeed, I can't."

"Well, you can drink," he answered. "You shall not leave this house alive unless you have a pint of milk with a little dash of what Patsy calls 'oh-be-joyful' in it."

He left the room for a moment, while she sat watching the door as a prisoner might watch for the return of a friendly jailer. He had a curious influence over her. It was wholly different from that of Orlando. Presently he returned.

"It's all right," he said. "Patsy and you and I will be at Nolan Doyle's ranch in another hour. I've sent word to Mrs. Doyle. I've ordered your milk-punch, too, and now I think I'll make my salad. You never saw me make a salad," he added, smiling. "I've done some successful operations in my day; I've played about with bones and sinews, proud of my work sometimes, but the making of a perfect salad is the proud achievement of a master-mind." He laughed like a boy. "'Come hither, come hither, my little daughter, and do not tremble so,'" he said so cheerfully as to be almost jeering.

His cheerfulness was not in vain, for a smile stole to her lips, though it flickered only for an instant and was gone. For all that, he knew he had saved the situation, and that another chapter of the life-history of Orlando and Louise had been ended. A fresh chapter would begin to-morrow; but sufficient unto the day was the evil thereof.

CHAPTER XII

MAN UNNATURAL

MAZARINE discovered the flight of Louise soon after she had gone. He had not been five hundred yards from the house since she returned with Orlando after the night spent upon the prairie, save when he had been obliged to go in to Askatoon and had taken her with him, dumb and passive. She had been a prisoner, tied to the stirrups of her captor; and he had berated her, had preached at her. As Louise had said, once on the way to Askatoon, he had even tried to make her kneel down in the dust of the trail and plead with Heaven to convict her of sin.

On the evening of Louise's flight, however, he had been forced to go to a neighboring ranch, and had commanded Li Choo to keep a strict watch at the windows of her room to see that she did not attempt escape. She could not escape by the door of the room because he had the key in his pocket. Li Choo was not a stern jailer, however. Mazarine had not been gone three minutes before the Chinaman had touch with Louise. He did more; he threw up into the open window of her room a screw-driver, with which she took the old-fashioned door off its hinges, after half an hour's work. Then, leaving a note on the table of the dining room, to say that she could not bear it any longer, that she would never come back, and that she meant to be free, she summoned Patsy Kernaghan and fled to the Young Doctor.

When Mazarine returned and found her note, he plunged up the stairs to her bedroom, his pious wrath gurgling in his throat, only to find the door locked; for Li

Choo had promptly restored it to its hinges after Louise had gone, afterwards dropping from the high window like a cat, without hurt.

Li Choo, blinking, opaque, immobile, save for his piercing and mysterious eyes, had no explanation to give. All he said was, "Me no see all sides house same time"; so suggesting that, as the room had windows on all three sides, Louise must have escaped while he made his supposed sentry-go, slip-slopping round the house. Mazarine showed what he thought by spitting in Li Choo's face, and then rushing into the house to get the rawhide whip with which he had punished the Chinaman before, and with which he had threatened his wife.

When he returned a moment afterwards, Li Choo was nowhere to be seen; but in his place were two other Chinamen who had, as it were, fallen from the skies, standing where Li Choo had stood, immobile, blinking and passive like Li Choo, their hands lost in the long sleeves of their coats, their pigtails so tightly braided as, in seeming, to draw their slanting eyelids still to greater incline, and to give a look of petrified intentness to their faces.

Something in their attitude gave Mazarine apprehension. It was as though Li Choo had been transformed by some hellish magic into two other Chinamen. The rage of his being seemed to stupefy him; he could not resist the sensation of the unnatural.

"What do you want? How did you come here?" he asked of the two in a husky voice.

"We want speak Li Choo. We come see Li Choo," answered one of the Chinamen impassively.

"He was here a minute ago," answered Mazarine gruffly.

Then he turned away, going swiftly toward the kitchen, and calling to Li Choo. As he went, he was conscious of low, cackling laughter, but when he turned to look the two Chinamen stood where he had left them, blinking and immobile.

The uncanny feeling in possession of him increased; the thing was unnatural. He lurched on, however, looking for Li Choo. The Chinaman was not to be found in the kitchen, in the woodshed, in the cellar, in the loft, or in his own attic room; and the half-breed, Rada, declared she had not seen him. He could not be at the stables, for they were too far away to be reached in the time; and there were no signs of him between the house and the stables. When Mazarine returned to the front of the house, the two Chinamen also had vanished; there were no signs of them anywhere. Search did not discover them.

Mingled anger and fear now possessed Mazarine. He would search no longer. No doubt the other two Chinamen had joined Li Choo in his hiding-place, wherever it was. Why had the Chinamen come? What were they after? It did not matter for the moment. What he wanted was Louise, his bad child-wife, who had broken from her cage and flown from him. Where would she go? Where, but to Slow Down Ranch—where, but to her lover, the circus-rider, the boy with the head of brown curls, with the ring on his finger and the Cupid mouth! Where would she go but to the man with whom she had spent the night on the prairie!

Now he believed altogether that she was guilty, that everybody had conspired to deceive him, that he was in a net of dark deception. Even the two Chinamen, mysteriously coming and going, had laughed at him like two

heathen gods, and had vanished suddenly like heathen gods.

A weakness came over him, and the skin of his face became creased and clammy like that of a drowned man; his limbs trembled, so desperate was his passion. He stumbled into the house and into the dining room, where he kept a little black-bound Bible once belonging to his great-grandfather. He had thumbed it well in past years, searching it hard for passages of violence and denunciation. Now holy superstition seized him in the midst of the work of the devil, surrounding him with an almost medieval instinct. He seized the ancient book, as it were to deliver its incantations against everyone destroying his peace, stealing from him that which he prized beyond all earthly things.

Take this woman away from him, this child-wife from his sixty-five years, and what was left for him? She was the garden of spring in which his old age roamed at ease luxuriously. She was the fruit of the tree of pleasure. She was that which made him young again, renewed in him youth and the joys of youth. Take her away, the flower that smelled so sweet and luscious, the thing that he had held so often to his lips and to his breast? Take away what was his, by every holy right, because it was all according to the law of the land and of the Holy Gospel, and what was left? Only old age, the empty house bereft of a fair young mistress—something to smile at and to curse, if need be, since it was his own by the laws of God and man.

Take her away, and the two wives that he had buried long years ago, with their gray heads and lank, sour faces, from which the light of youth had fled with the first child come to them—their ghosts would seek him out. They

would sit at his table, and taunt him with his vanished Louise, asking him if he thought she was anything more than one of the trolls that tempted men aforetime—one of the devil's wenches that lured him into the secret garden, only at last to leave him scorned and alone.

Where had she gone, his troll, with the face of an angel? Where had she gone? Where would she go, except to her devil's lover at Slow Down Ranch!

He had just started for Slow Down Ranch armed with his greasy, well-thumbed Bible like a weapon in his pocket, when he heard a voice call him. It was full of the devil's laughter. It was the voice of Burlingame, the lawyer, on his horse. Burlingame had had a weary day and was refreshing himself by a canter on the prairie.

"Where are you going?" asked Burlingame, as he cantered up to Mazarine's wagon. "To Slow Down Ranch?"

He saw the look of the drowned man in the face of Mazarine, over whom the flood of disaster had passed, and he guessed at once the cause of it; for Burlingame had the philosophy of a Satanic mind, and he knew the things that happen to human nature.

"So, she's gone again, has she?" he added deliberately, with intent to put a knife into the old man's feelings and to turn it in the thick of them. He wanted to hurt, because Mazarine had only a short time before dispensed with his services as a lawyer, and had blocked the way to that intimacy which he had hoped to establish with Tralee and its mistress. Besides, his pride as a professional man had been hurt, and he had been deprived of income which now went to his most hated professional rival. Mazarine's jealous soul had cut him off, on coming

to know Burlingame's dark reputation. He had not liked the look Burlingame had given Louise when they met.

"Gone again, has she?" Burlingame repeated sarcastically. "Well, you needn't go to Slow Down Ranch to find her. She isn't there, and you won't find him there either, for I saw him come by the Lark River Trail into Askatoon as I left, and a lady was with him. He booked this morning for the sleeper of the express going East to-night; so, if I were you, I'd turn my horse's nose to Askatoon, Mr. Mazarine. I don't know why I tell you this, as you're not my client now, but I go about the world doing good, Mr. Mazarine—only doing good."

There was a look in Burlingame's face which Heaven would not have accepted as goodness, and there was that in his voice which did not belong to the courts of the Lord. Malice, though veiled, showed in face and sounded in voice. Even as he spoke, Joel Mazarine turned his horse's head toward Askatoon.

"You're sure a woman was with him? You're sure she was with him?" he asked in a chaos of passion.

"I couldn't see her face; it was too far away," answered Burlingame suggestively, "but you can form your own conclusions—and the express is due in thirty minutes!"

He looked at his watch complacently. "What's the good, Mazarine? Why don't you say, 'Go and sin no more?' Or why don't you divorce her with the evidence about that night on the prairie? I could have got you a verdict and damages. Yes, I could have got you plenty of damages. He's rich. You took her back and condoned; you condoned, Mazarine, and now you'll have neither damages nor wife—and the express goes in thirty minutes!"

"The express won't take Mrs. Mazarine away to-night," the old man said, a look of jungle fierceness filling his face.

Burlingame laughed unpleasantly. "Yes, you'll foul your own nest, Mazarine, and then bring her back to live in it. I know you. It isn't the love of God in your heart, because you'll never forgive her; but you'll bring her back to the nest you fouled, just because you want her—'you damned and luxurious mountain goat,' as Shakespeare called your kind."

With another laugh, which somewhat resembled that of the two strange vanished Chinamen, Burlingame flicked his horse and cantered away. A little time afterwards, however, he turned and looked toward Askatoon, and he saw the old man whipping his horse into a gallop to reach Askatoon railway station before the express went East.

"It's true, Mazarine," he said aloud. "Orlando booked for the sleeper going East in thirty minutes; but the sleeper was for one only, and that one was his mother, you old hippopotamus. . . . But I wonder where she is—where the divine Louise is? She hasn't levanted with her Orlando. . . . Now, I wonder!" he added.

Then, with a sudden impulse, he dug heels into his horse's side, and galloped back towards Askatoon. He wanted to see what would happen before the express went East.

CHAPTER XIII

ORLANDO GIVES A WARNING

Askatoon had never lost its interest for Mazarine and his wife since the day the Mayor had welcomed them at the railway station. Askatoon was not a petty town. Its career had been checkered and interesting, and it had given haven to a large number of uncommon people. Unusual happenings had been its portion ever since it had been the rail-head of the Great Transcontinental Line, and many enterprising men, instead of moving on with the railway, when it ceased to be the rail-head, settled there and gave the place its character. The town had never been lawless, although some lawless people had sojourned there.

It was too busy a place to be fussing about little things, or tearing people's characters to pieces, or gossiping even to the usual degree; yet in its history it had never gossiped so much as it had done since the Mazarines had come.

From the first the vast majority of folk had sided with Louise and denounced Mazarine. They knew well she had married too young to be self-seeking or intriguing; and, in any case, no woman in Askatoon or yet in the West, could have conceived of a girl marrying "the ancient one from the jungle," as Burlingame had called him.

Burlingame could never have been on the side of the Ten Commandments himself, even with a sure and certain hope of happiness on earth, and in Heaven also, guaranteed to him. Nothing could have condemned Mazarine so

utterly as the coalition between the "holy good people," as Burlingame called them, and himself; and between the holy good people and himself were many who in their secret hearts would never have shunned Louise if, after the night on the prairie with Orlando, release had been found for her in the divorce court. Jonas Billings had put the matter in a nutshell when he said:

"It ain't natural, them two, at Tralee. For marrying her he ought to be tarred and feathered, and for the way he treats her he ought to be let loose in the ha'nts of the grizzlies. What he done to that girl is a crime ag'in' the law. If there was any real spunk in the Methodists, they'd spit him out like pus."

That was exactly what the Methodist body had decided to do on the very day that Louise had fled from Tralee and the old man pursued her in the wrong direction. The Methodist body had determined to discipline Mazarine, to eject him from their communion, because he had raised a whip against his wife; because he had maltreated Li Choo; and because he had used language unbecoming a Christian. They had decided that Mazarine had not shown the righteous anger of a Christian man, but of one who had blackslidden, and who, in the words of Rigby the chemist, "Must be spewed out of the mouth of the righteous into the dust of shame."

That was the situation when Joel Mazarine drove furiously into the town and made for the railway station. Men like Jonas Billings, who saw him, and had the scent for sensation, passed the word on downtown, as it is called, that something "was up" with Mazarine, and the railway station was the place where what was up could be seen. Therefore, a quarter of an hour before the arrival of the express which was to carry Orlando Guise's

mother to her sick sister three hundred miles down the line, a goodly number of citizens had gathered at the station—far more than usually watched the entrance or exit of the express.

Mazarine's wagon and steaming horses were tied up outside the station, and inside on the platform Moses-not-much, as Mazarine had been called by Jonas Billings, marched up and down, his snaky little eyes blinking at the doorway of the station waiting room. People came and some of them nodded to him derisively. Some, with more hardihood, asked him if he was going East—if he was expecting anyone—if he was seeing somebody off.

A good many asked him the last question, because, as the minutes had passed, Burlingame had arrived. He had also disclosed his great joke to those who would carry it far and near, together with the news that Louise had taken flight. The last fact, however, was known to several people, because more than one had seen the Young Doctor and Patsy Kernaghan taking Louise to Nolan Doyle's ranch.

It was dusk. The lamps of the station were being lighted five minutes before the express arrived, and as the lights flared up Orlando entered the waiting room of the station, with a lady on his arm, and presently showed at the platform doorway, smiling and cheerful. He did not blench when Mazarine came towards him. Mazarine had seen the flutter of a blue skirt in the waiting room, and his wife had worn blue that day!

Orlando saw the heavy, offensive figure of Mazarine making for him. He, however, appeared to take no notice, though he watched his outrageous pursuer out of the corner of his eye, as he quietly gave orders to a porter concerning a little heap of luggage. When he had finished

this, he turned, as it were casually, to Mazarine. Then he giggled in the face of the Master of Tralee. It was like the matador's waving of the scarlet cloth in the face of the enraged bull. Having thus relieved his feelings, Orlando turned and walked to the door of the reception-room, but was stopped by the old man rushing at him. Swinging round, Orlando almost filled the doorway.

"You devil's spawn," Mazarine almost shouted, "get out of that doorway. I want my wife. You needn't try to hide her. You thief! You lecherous circus rider! Stand aside! Stand aside—leper!"

Orlando coolly stretched out his elbows till they touched the sides of the door, and as the crowd pressed he said to them mockingly:

"Get back, boys. Give him air. Can't you see he's gasping for breath." Then he giggled again.

The old man looked round at the crowd, but he saw no sympathy—only aversion and ridicule. Suddenly he snatched his little black-bound Bible from his pocket, and held it up.

"What does this Book say?" he thundered. "It says that a wife shall cleave unto her husband until death. For the seducer and the betrayer death is the portion."

The whistle of the incoming train was heard in the distance.

The old man was desperate. It was clear he meant to assault Orlando. "You will only take her away over my dead body," he ground out in his passion. "The Lord gave, and only the Lord shall take away." He gathered himself together for the attack.

Orlando waved a hand at him as one would at a troublesome child. At that instant, his mother stepped up behind him in the waiting room.

"Orlando," she said in her mincing, piping little voice, "Orlando, dear, the train is coming. Let me out. I'm not afraid of that bad man. I want to catch my train."

Orlando stepped aside, and his mother passed through, to the consternation of Mazarine, who fell back. The old man now realized that Burlingame had tricked him. Laughter went up from the crowd. They had had a great show at no cost.

"'If at first you don't succeed, try, try again,' Mr. Mazarine!" called someone from the crowd.

"It's the next train she's going by, old Moses-not-much," shouted a friend of Jonas Billings.

"She's had enough of you, Joel!" sneered another mocker.

"Wouldn't you like to know where she is, yellow-lugs?" queried a fat washerwoman.

For an instant Mazarine stood bemused, and then, thrusting the Bible into his pocket, he drew himself up in an effort of pride and defiance.

"Judases! Jezebels!" he burst out at them all.

Then he lunged through the doorway of the waiting room; but at the door opening on the street his courage gave way, and hunched up like one in pain, he ran towards the hitching-post where he had left his horses and wagon. They were not there. With a groan which was also a malediction, he went up the street like a wounded elephant, and made his way to the police-station through a town which had no pity for him.

During the hour he remained in the town, Mazarine searched in vain for his horses and wagon. He looked everywhere except in the shed behind the Methodist Church. It was there the two wags who had played the trick on him had carefully hitched the horses, and pres-

ently they announced in town that they did it because they knew Mazarine would want to go to the prayer-meeting to lay his crimes before the Mercy Seat!

It was quite true that it was prayer-meeting night, and as the merciless wags left the shed, the voice of Brother Rigby the chemist was narrating for the hundredth time the story of his conversion, when, as he said, "the pains of hell gat hold of him." Brother Rigby loved to relate the tortures of the day when he was convicted of sin; but on this night his ancient story seemed appropriate, as he had dwelt with great severity on the doings of the backslider, Joel Mazarine.

When the two wags returned to the front street of Askatoon, they were just in time to see the second meeting of Orlando and Mazarine. Mazarine had not been able to find his horses at any hotel or livery-stable, or in any street. It was at the moment when, in his distraction, he had decided to walk back to Tralee, that Orlando, driving up the street, saw him. Orlando reined in his horses, dropped from his buggy and approached him.

There was a look in Orlando's eyes which was a reflection from a remote past, from ancestors who had settled their troubles with the first weapon and the best opportunity to their hands. "The furrin element in him," as Jonas Billings called it, had been at full flood ever since he had bade his mother good-bye. A storm of anger had been raised in him. As he said to himself, he had had enough; he had been filled up to the chin by the Mazarine business; and his impulsive youth wanted to end it by some smashing act which would be sensational and decisive. So it was that Fate offered the opportunity, as he came up the front street of Askatoon, and found him-

self face to face with Mazarine, over against the offices of Burlingame.

"A word with you, Mr. Mazarine," he said, with the air of a man who wants to ease his mind of its trouble by action. "Back there at the station, I kept my tongue and let you down easy enough, because my mother was present. She is old and sensitive, and she doesn't like to see her son doing the dirty work every man must do some time or other, when there's street-cleaning to be done. Now, let me tell you this: you've slandered as good a girl, you've libelled as straight a wife, as the best man in the world ever had. You've made a public scandal of your private home. You've treated the pure thing as if it were the foul thing; and yet, you want to keep the pure thing that you treat like a foul thing, under your rawhide whip, because it's young and beautiful and good. You don't want to save her soul"—he pointed to the Bible, which the old man had snatched from his pocket again—"you don't want to save her soul. You don't care whether she's happy in this world or the next; what you want is what you can see of her, for your life in this world only. You want——"

The old man interrupted him with a savage emotion which Jonas Billings said made him look like "a satyre."

"I want to save her from the wrath to come," he said. "This here holy Book gives me my rights. It says, 'Thou shalt not steal,' and the trouble I have comes from you that's stole my wife, that's put her soul in jeopardy, robbed my home——"

"Robbed your home!" interjected Orlando quietly, but with a voice of suppressed passion. "Robbed your home! Why, the other day you tried to prevent her entering it. You wanted to shut her out. After she had lived

with you all those years, you believed she lied to you when she told you the truth about that night on the prairie; but her innocence was proved by one who was there all the time, and for shame's sake you had to let her in. But she couldn't stand it. I don't wonder. A lark wouldn't be at home where a vulture roosted."

"And so the lark flies away to the cuckoo," snarled the old man, with flecks of froth gathering at the corners of his mouth; for the sight of this handsome, long-limbed youth enraged him.

"Give her back to me. You know where she is," he persisted. "You've got her hid away. That's why you've sent your mother East—so's she wouldn't know, though from what I see I shouldn't think it'd have made much difference to her."

Exclamations broke from the crowd. It was the wild West. It was a country where, not twenty years before, men did justice upon men without the assistance of the law; and the West understood that the dark insult just uttered would in days not far gone have meant death. The onlookers exclaimed, and then became silent, because a subtle sense of tragedy suddenly smothered their voices. Upon the silence there broke a little giggling laugh. It came from lips that were one in paleness with a face grown stony.

"I ought to kill you," Orlando said quietly after a moment, yet scarcely above a whisper. "I ought to kill you, Mazarine, but that would only be playing your game; for the law would get hold of me, and the girl that has left you would be sorrowful, for she knows I love her, though I never told her so. She'd be sorry to see the law get at me. She's going to be mine some day, in the right way. I'm not going behind your back to say it; I'm

announcing it to all and sundry. I never did a thing to her that couldn't have been seen by all the world, and I never said a thing to her that couldn't be heard by all the world; but I hope she'll never go back to you. You've made a sewer for her to live in, not a home. As I said, I ought to kill you, but that would play your game, so I won't—not now. But I tell you this, Mazarine: if I ever meet you again—and I'm sure to do so—and you don't get off the road I'm travelling on, or the sidewalk I'm walking on, when I meet you or when I pass you, I'll let you have what'll send you to hell, before you can wink twice.

"As for Louise—as for her: I don't know where she is, but I'll find her. One thing is sure: if I see her, I'll tell her never to go back to you; and she won't. You've drunk at the waters of Canaan for the last time. For a Christian you're pretty filthy. Go and wash in the pool of Siloam and be clean—damn you, Mazarine!"

With that he turned, almost unheeding the hands thrust out to grip his, the voices murmuring approval. In a moment he had swung his horses round. He did not go beyond ten yards, however, before someone, running beside his wagon, whispered up to him: "She's out at Nolan Doyle's Ranch. She went with the Young Doctor and Patsy Kernaghan."

Behind, in the street, a young boy came running through the crowd and shouting: "I know where they are! I know where they are!" He stopped before Mazarine. "Gimme half a dollar, and I'll tell you where your horses are. Gimme half a dollar. Gimme half a dollar, and I'll tell you."

An instant later, with the half-dollar in his hand, he said: "They're up to the shed of the Meetin' House."

"Yes, go along up to the Meetin' House, Mr. Maza-

rine," said one of the miscreants who had driven the horses there. "They're holding a post mortem on you at the prayer-meetin'. They say you're dead in trespasses and sins. Get along, Joel."

The crowd started to follow him to the shed where his horses were, but after a moment he turned on them and said:

"Ain't you heerd and seen enough? Ain't there no law to protect a man?"

A hoe was leaning against a fence. He saw it, and with sudden fury, seizing it, swung it round his head as if to throw it into the crowd. At that moment a stalwart constable ran forward, raised a hand towards Mazarine, and then addressed the crowd.

"We've had enough of this," he said. "I'll lock up any man that goes a step further towards the Meetin' House. Where do you think you are? This is Askatoon, the place of peace and happiness, and we're going to be happy, if I have to lock up the hull lot of you. I guess you can go right on, Mr. Mazarine," he added. "Go right on and git your wagon."

A moment later Mazarine was walking alone towards the Meeting House; but no, not alone, for a hundred devils were with him.

CHAPTER XIV

FILION AND FIONA

PATSY KERNAGHAN was in his element in the garden with which Norah Doyle had decorated the brown bosom of the prairie. It had verdant shrubs, green turf, thick fringes of flowers, and one solitary elm-tree in the center whose branches spread like a cedar of Lebanon. In the moonlight Patsy had the telling of a wonderful story to such an audience as he had never had before in his life, and he had had them from Bundoran to Limerick, from Limerick to the foothills of the Rockies.

The séance of love and legend had been Patsy's own idea. At the supper-table spread by Norah Doyle, in spite of the protests of her visitors—the Young Doctor, Louise and Patsy—Nolan Doyle, who had a fine gift for playful talk, had tried to keep the situation free from melodrama. Yet Patsy had observed that, in spite of all efforts, Louise's eyes now and then filled with tears. Also, he saw that her senses seemed alert for something outside their little circle. It was as though she expected someone to arrive. She was in that state which is not normal and yet not abnormal—a kind of trance in which she did ordinary things in a natural way, yet mechanically, without full consciousness.

There was no one at the table who did not realize for what, and for whom, she was waiting. To her primitive spirit, now that she was in trouble because of him, it seemed inevitable that Orlando should come. One thing was fixed in her mind: she would never return to Tralee or to the man whose odious presence made her feel as though she were in a cage with an animal.

Jonas Billings had called him "the ancient one from the jungle," and that was how at last he appeared to her. His arms and breast were thick with hair; the hair on his face grew almost up to the eyes; the fingers of his splayed hands were blunt and broad; and his hair was like a nest for things of the jungle undergrowth.

Since she had been awakened, the memory of his hot breath in her face, of his clumsy fevered embrace was a torment to her; for always in contrast there were the fresh clean-shaven cheeks and chin of a young Berserker with honest, wondering blue eyes, the curly head of a child, and body and limbs like a young lean stag.

Orlando's touch was never either clammy or fevered. She could recall every time that he had touched her: when her fingers and his met on the afternoon that Li Choo had thrown himself down the staircase with the priceless porcelain; also the evening of the night spent on the prairie when, after the accident, her hand had been linked into his arm; also when he had clasped her fingers at their meeting in the morning. On each occasion she had felt a thrill like that of music—persuasive, living vibrations passing to remote recesses of her being.

No nearer had she ever come to the man she loved, no nearer had he sought to come. Once, the evening after the night spent on the prairie, when old Joel Mazarine had tried to make her pray and ask God's forgiveness, and he had kissed her with the lips of hungry old age, she had suddenly sat up in bed, her heart beating hard, every nerve palpitating, because in imagination she had seen herself in Orlando's arms, with his lips pressed to hers.

Poor neophyte in life's mysteries, having served as a slave at false altars of which she did not even know the ritual! It was no wonder that, after all she had suffered,

she could not now bring herself into tune with the commonplace intercourse of life. Not that her friends utterly failed to lure her into it. She might well have been the victim of hysterics, but she was only distrait, pensive and gently smiling, with the smile of a good heart. Smiling with her had ever taken the place of conversation. It was an apology for not speaking when she could not speak what she felt.

Once during the meal she seemed to start slightly, as though she heard a familiar sound, and for some minutes afterwards she seemed to be listening, as it were, for a knock at the door, which did not come. Immediately after that, Patsy, happy in sitting down to table with "the quality"—for such they were to him—because he saw that Louise must be distracted, and because he had seen story-telling, many a time, draw people away from their troubles even more than music, said:

"Did you remember the day it is, anny of you? Shure, it's St. Droid's Day! Aw, then, don't you know who he was? You don't! Well, well, there's no tellin' how ignorant the wurruld can be. St. Droid—aw, he was a good man that brought the two children of Chief Diarmid and Queen Moira together. You didn't know about them two? You niver h'ard of Chief Diarmid and Queen Moira and their two lovely children? Well, there it is, there's no sayin' how ignorant y'are if y'are not Irish. Aw no, they wasn't man and wife. Diarmid was a widower and Moira was a widow. Diarmid's boy was Filion and Moira's girl was Fiona, an' the troubles of the two'd make a book for ivry day of the week, an' two for Sunday. An' the way that St. Droid brought them two together—— Aw, come outside in the gardin where the moon's to the full, an' it's warm enough for anny man or woman that's

got a warm heart, an' I'll tell you the story of Filion and Fiona. You'll not be forgettin' the names of them now, will ye? And while I'm tellin' you, all the time you'll be thinkin' of St. Droid, for it's his day. It was nothin' till him, St. Droid, that he lived in a cave, you understan'. Wasn't his face like the sun comin' up over the lake at Ballinhoe in the month of June? Well, it doesn't matter if you've niver seen Ballinhoe—you understan' what I mean. Well then, come out intil the gardin, darlin's. Shure, I'm achin' to tell you the story—as fine a love-story as iver was told to man and woman."

So it was that Louise with eyes alight—for Patsy had a voice that could stir imagination in the dullest—so it was that Louise and the others went out into the moonlit garden, the prairie around them like an endless waste of sea. There they placed themselves in a half circle around Patsy, who sat upon a little bench, with his back to the big spreading elm-tree, which by some special gift had grown alone over the myriad years, defying storm and winter's frost, until it seemed to have an honored permanence, as stable as the prairie earth itself.

As they seated themselves, there was renewed in Louise the feeling she had at supper-time, when she had imagined —or had her senses accurately divined?—that Orlando was near, so sure had been the sensation that she had expected Orlando to enter the room where they sat. Now it was on her again, and somehow she felt him there with her. He was Filion and she was Fiona.

Since the day she had first seen Orlando, she had awakened to life's realities. There had grown in her an alertness and a delicate sense of things, which, though natural to one born with a soul that cared little for sordid things, was not common, except in Celtic circles where the

unseen thing is more real than the seen—where gold and precious stones are only valued in so far as they can purchase freedom, dreams and desire.

Louise had not been thrilled without cause. Orlando, the real material Orlando, had driven out to Nolan Doyle's Ranch, but having come could not at first bring himself to enter. Something in him kept saying that it was not fair to her; kept admonishing him to let things take their course; that now was not the time to see her; that it might place her in a false position. Blameless though she was, she might be blamed by the world, if he and she, on the night that she fled from Joel Mazarine, should meet, and, above all, meet alone—and what was the good of meeting at all, if they did not meet alone! What could two voiceless people say to each other, people who only spoke with their hearts and souls, when others were staring at them, watching every act, listening for every word. His better sense kept telling him to go back to Slow Down Ranch.

But there she was inside Nolan Doyle's house, and he had come deliberately to see her.

He stood outside in the garden near the great spreading elm-tree, torn by a sense of duty and a sense of desire; but the desire was to let her see by his presence that he would be a tower of strength to her, no matter what happened. It was not the desire which had possessed him whom Patsy Kernaghan had called the keeper of the "zoolyogical" garden.

He had just made up his mind that courage was the right thing: that he must see her in the presence of others for one minute, whatever the issue, when she came out with Patsy Kernaghan, the Young Doctor, and Norah and Nolan Doyle. None saw him, and, as they seated themselves, he stepped noiselessly under the spreading branches

of the elm-tree. He would not speak to them yet; he would wait. In the shade made by the drooping branches he could not be seen, yet he could hear and see all.

There was silence for a moment, and then Patsy began the tale of St. Droid—"whoever he was," as Patsy said to himself; for he was going to make up out of his head this story of St. Droid and St. Droid's Day, and Queen Moira, Filion and Fiona. It was a bold idea, but it gave Patsy the opportunity of his life.

His description of Black Brian, the rich, ruthless King, to whom Queen Moira gave her daughter Fiona, despite the girl's bitter sorrow, was a masterpiece. It was modelled on Joel Mazarine. It was the behemoth transferred to Ireland, to the *cromlechs* and castles, to the causeways, the caves, and the stony hillsides—to the bogs and the quicksands and the Little Men; but it could not be recognized as a portrait, though everyone felt how wonderful it was that a legend of a thousand years should be so close to the life of Askatoon.

Patsy had no knowledge of what the mother of Louise was like, but the likeness between her cruel, material, selfish spirit and Queen Moira, in the sacrifice of their offspring, provoked the admiration of the Young Doctor, whose philosophical mind had soon discovered that Patsy was making up the tale.

That did not matter. Having got the thing started, Patsy gave reins to his imagination; and storm, terror, danger, and the capture of Fiona by Filion, from Black Brian's castle in the hills, was told with primitive force and passion. But the most wonderful part of the story described how a strange dwarfed Little Man came out of the hills in the East, across the land, to the western fastness of Black Brian, and there slew that evil man,

because of an ancient feud—slew him in a situation of great indignity, and left him lying on the sands for the tide to wash him out to the deep and hungry sea. Even here Patsy had his inspiration from real life; and yet he disguised it all so well that no one except the Young Doctor even imagined what he meant.

Under the tree Orlando listened with strained attention, absorbed and, at times, almost overcome. His long sigh of relief was joined to the sighs of the others when Patsy finished. The Young Doctor rose to go, and the others rose also.

"That's a wonderful story, Patsy," said the Young Doctor to him; and he added quizzically: "You tell it so well because you've told it so often before, I suppose?"

"Aw, well, that's it, I expect," answered the Irishman coolly.

"I thought so," responded the Young Doctor. "Now, how many times do you think you've told that story before, Patsy?"

"About a hundred, I should think; or no—I should think about two hundred times," answered Patsy shamelessly.

"I thought so," said the Young Doctor, but before tuning to go into the house, he leaned and whispered in his ear: "Patsy, you're the most beautiful liar that ever came out of Ireland."

"Aw, Doctor dear!" said Patsy softly.

They all moved towards the house, save Louise.

"Please, I want to stay behind a minute or two," she said, as she held out a hand to the Young Doctor. "Don't wait for me. I want to be alone a little while."

Once more the Young Doctor felt the trembling appeal

of her palm as on the first day they met, and he gripped her hand warmly.

"It will all come right. Good-night, my dear," he said cheerfully. "Have a good sleep on it."

Louise remained in the garden alone, the moon shining on her face lifted to the sky. For a moment she stood so, wrapped in the peace of the night, but her body was almost panting from the thrill of the legend which Patsy Kernaghan had told. As he had meant it to do, it gave her hope; although before her eyes was the picture that Patsy had drawn of Black Brian with his great sword beside him lying on the sands, waiting for the hungry sea to claim him.

Presently there stole through the warm air of the night the sound of her own name. She did not start. It seemed to her part of the dream in which she was. Her hand went to her heart, however.

Again in Orlando's voice came the word "*Louise,*" a little louder now. She turned towards the tree, and there beside it stood Orlando.

For an instant there was a sense of unreality, of ghostliness, and then she gave a little cry of pain and joy. As she ran towards him, with sudden impulse, his arms spread out and he caught her to his breast.

His lips swept her hair. "Louise! Louise!" he whispered passionately. For an instant they stood so, and then he gently pressed her away from him.

"I had to come," he said. "I want you to know that, whatever happens, you may depend on me. When you call, I will come. I must go now. For your sake I must not stay. I had to see you, I had to tell you what I had never told you."

"You've always told me," she murmured.

He stretched out his hand to clasp hers. He did not

"WHATEVER HAPPENS YOU MAY DEPEND ON ME"

dare to open his arms again. The lips which he had never kissed were very near, and ah, so sweet! She must not come to him now.

One swift clasp of the hand, and then he vaulted over the fence and was gone. A few moments afterwards she heard the rumble of his wagon on the prairie—he had tied up his horses some distance from the house.

As the Young Doctor drove homeward with Patsy Kernaghan, he also heard the rumble of the wagon not far in front of him. Then he began to wonder why Louise had waited behind in the garden. He put the thought away from him, however. There was no deceit in Louise; he was sure of that.

CHAPTER XV

OUTWARD BOUND

JOEL MAZARINE did not take the trail to Tralee immediately after he found his wagon and horses in the shed of the Methodist Meeting House. As he drove through the main street of Askatoon again, his lawyer—Burlingame's rival—waved a hand towards him in greeting. An idea suddenly possessed the old man, and he stopped the horses and beckoned.

"Get in and come to your office with me," he said to the lawyer. "There's some business to do right off."

The unpopularity of a client in no way affects a lawyer. Indeed, the most notorious criminal is the greatest legal advertisement, and the fortunate part of the business is that no lawyer is ever identified with the morals, crimes or virtues of his client, yet has particular advantage from his crimes. So it was that Mazarine's lawyer enjoyed the public attention given to his drive through the town with Mazarine. He could hear this man say, "Hello, what's up!" or another remark that the Law and the Gospel were out for war.

Just as they were about to enter the office, however, Jonas Billings, who had a faculty for being everywhere at the interesting moment, said, so as to be heard by Mazarine and his lawyer, and all others standing near:

"Goin' to leave his property away from his wife! Makin' a new will—eh? That's it, stamp on a girl when she's down! When you can't win the woman, keep the cash. Woe is me, Willy, but the wild one rageth!"

Jonas's drawling, nasal, high-pitched sarcasm reached

Mazarine's ears and stung him. He lurched round, and with beady eyes blinking with malice, said roughly: "The fool is known by his folly."

"You don't need to label yourself, Mr. Mazarine," retorted Jonas with a grin.

The crowd laughed in approval. The loose lower lip of the Master of Tralee quivered. The leviathan was being tortured by the little sharks.

Presently the door of the lawyer's office slammed on the street, and Mazarine proceeded to make a new will, which should leave everything away from Louise. After he had slowly dictated the terms of the will, with a glutinous solemnity he said:

"There; that's what comes of breaking the laws of God and man. That's what a woman loses who doesn't do her duty by the man that can give her everything, and that's giving her everything, while she plays the Jezebel."

"I'll complete this for you, and you can sign it now," remarked the lawyer evasively, not without shrinking; "but it won't stand as it is, or as you want it to stand, because Mrs. Mazarine has her legal claims in spite of it! She's got a wife's dower-rights according to the law. That's one-third of your property. It's the law of the land, and you can't sign it away from her, Mr. Mazarine."

The old man's face darkened still more; his crooked fingers twisted in his beard.

"I see you forgot that," added the lawyer. "There's only one way to dispossess her, and that's to put her through divorce—if you think you can. Of course this document'll stand as far as it goes, and it's perfectly legal, but it isn't what you intend, and she'd get her one-third in spite of it."

"I'll come back to-morrow," said the old man, rising to his feet. "You make it out, and I'll come back and sign it to-morrow. I'll make a sure thing of so much, anyway. The divorce'll settle the rest. You have it ready at noon to-morrow, and you can start divorce proceedings to-morrow, too. There's plenty of evidence. She run away from me to go to him. She stayed with him a whole night on the prairie. I want the divorce, and I can get the evidence. Everybody knows. This is the Lord's business, and I mean to see it through. Shame has come to the house of a servant of the Lord, and there must be purging. In the days of David she would have been stoned to death, and not so far back as that, either."

A moment afterwards he was gone, slamming the door behind him. His blood was up—a turgid, angry flood almost bursting his veins. He now made his way to the house of the Methodist minister. There he announced that if he was disciplined at Quarterly Meeting, as was talked about in the streets, he would go to law against every class-leader for defamation of character.

By the time this was done the evening was well advanced. He did not leave Askatoon until the moment which coincided with that in which Orlando left Nolan Doyle's garden and took the trail to Slow Down Ranch. Orlando would strike the trail from Askatoon to Tralee at a point where another trail also joined.

Mazarine drove fast through the town, as though eager to put it behind him, but when he reached the trail on the prairie he slackened his pace, and drove steadily homewards, lost in the darkest reflections he had ever known; and that was saying much. The reins lay loose in his fingers, and he became so absorbed that he was conscious of nothing save movement.

The heart of Black Brian, the King, of whom Patsy Kernaghan told his mythical story in Nolan Doyle's garden, had never housed more repulsive thoughts than were in Mazarine's heart in this unfortunate hour of his own making. No single feeling of kindness was in his spirit. He heard nothing, was conscious of nothing, save his own grim, fantastic imaginings.

A jealousy and hatred as terrible as ever possessed a man were on him. An egregious self-will, a dreadful spirit of unholy old age in him, was turned hatefully upon the youth long since gone from himself—the youth which, in its wild, innocent ardors, had brought two young people together, one of them his own captive for years.

The peace of the prairie, the shining, infant moon, the kindly darkness, were all at variance with the soul of the man, whose only possession was what money could buy; and what money had bought in the way of human flesh and blood, beauty and sweet youth he had not been able to hold. To his mind, what was the good of having riches and power, if you could not also have love, licence and the loot of the conqueror!

He had wrestled with the Lord in prayer; he had been a class-leader and a lay-preacher; he had exhorted and denounced; he had pleaded and proscribed; yet never in all his days of professed religion had a heart for others really moved Joel Mazarine.

He had given now and then of gold and silver, because of the glow of mind which the upraised hands of admiration brought him, mistaking it for the real thing; but his life had been barren because it had not emptied itself for others, at any time, or anywhere.

He had been a professed Christian, not because of Olivet, but because of Sinai. It was the stormy authority

of the sword of the Lord of Gideon of the Old Testament which had drawn him into the fold of religion. It was some strain of heredity, his upbringing, the life into which he was born, pious, pedantic and preposterously prayerful, which had made him a professional Christian, as he was a professional farmer, rancher and money-maker. For such a man there never could be peace.

In his own world of wanton inhumanity, oblivious of all except his torturing thoughts, he did not know that, as he neared the cross trails on his way homewards, something shadowy, stooping, sprang up from the roadside and slip-slopped after his wagon—slip-slopped—slip-slopped—catching the thud of the horses' hoofs, and making its footsteps coincide.

All at once the shadowy figure swung itself up softly and remained for an instant, half-kneeling, in the body of the wagon. Then suddenly, noiselessly, it rose up, leaned over the absorbed Joel Mazarine, and with long, hooked, steely fingers caught the throat of the Master of Tralee under the grayish beard. They clenched there with a power like that of three men; for this was the kind of grip which, far away in the country of the Yang-tse-kiang, Li Choo had learned in the days when he had made youth a thing to be remembered.

No convulsive effort on the part of the victim could loosen that terrible grip; but the horses, responding to the first jerk of the reins following the attack, stood still, while a human soul was being wrenched out of the world behind them.

No word was spoken. From the moment the fingers clutched his throat, Joel Mazarine could not speak, and Li Choo did his swift work in grim and ghastly silence.

It did not take long. When the vain struggles had

ceased and the fingers were loosened, Li Choo's tongue clucked in his mouth, once, twice, thrice; and that was all. It was a ghastly sort of mirth, and it had in it a multitude of things. Among them were vengeance and wild justice, and the thing that comes down through innumerable years in the Oriental mind—that the East is greater than the West; that now and then the East must prove itself against the West with all the cruelty of the world's prime.

For a moment Li Choo stood and looked at the motionless figure, with the head fallen on the breast; then he put the reins carefully in the hands of the dead man, placed the fallen hat on his head, climbed down from the wagon, patted a horse as he slip-slopped by, and disappeared towards Tralee into the night, leaving what was left of Joel Mazarine in his wagon at the crossing of the trails.

As Li Choo stole swiftly away, he met two other figures, silent and shadowy, and somehow strangely unreal, like his own. After a moment's whispering, they all three turned their faces again towards Tralee.

Once they stopped and listened. There was the sound of wagons. One was coming from the north—that is, from the direction of Tralee; the other was coming from the southeast—that is, Nolan Doyle's ranch.

Li Choo's tongue clucked in his mouth; then he made an exclamation in Chinese, at which the others clucked also, and then they moved on again.

CHAPTER XVI

AT THE CROSS TRAILS

LIKE Joel Mazarine on his journey from Askatoon, Orlando, on his journey from Nolan Doyle's ranch, was absorbed, but his reflections were as different from those of the Master of Tralee as sunrise is from midnight; indeed, so bright was the light within Orlando's spirit that the very prairie around him seemed aflame. The moment with Louise in the garden lighted by the dim moon, the passing instant of perfect understanding, the touch of her hair upon his lips, her supple form yielding to his as he clasped her in his arms, had dropped like a curtain between him and the fateful episode in the main street of Askatoon.

That wonderful elation of youth on its first excursion into perfumed meads of Love possessed him. He had never had flutterings of the heart for any woman until his eyes met the eyes of Louise at their first meeting, and a new world had been opened up to him. He had been as naïve and native a human being, with all his apparent foppishness, as had ever moved among men. What seemed his vanity had nothing to do with thoughts of womankind. It had been a decorative sense come honestly from picturesque forebears, and indeed from his own mother.

In truth, until the day he had met Louise, or rather until the day of the broncho-busting, and the fateful night on the prairie, he had never grown up. He was wise with the wisdom of a child—sheer instinct, rightness of mind, real decision of character. His giggling laugh had been

the undisciplined simplicity of the child, which, when he had reached manhood, had never been formalized by conventions. Something indefinite had marked him until Louise had come, and now he was definite, determined, alive with a new feeling which made his spirit sing—his spirit and his lips; for, as he came from Nolan Doyle's ranch to the cross trails, he kept humming to himself, between moments of silence in which he visualized Louise in a hundred attitudes, as he had seen her. There had come to him, without the asking even, that which Joel Mazarine, had he been as rich as any man alive or dead, could not have bought. That was why he hummed to himself in happiness.

Youth answering to youth had claimed its own; love springing from the dawn, brave and bright-eyed, had waved its wand towards that good country called Home. Never from the first had any thought come into the minds of either of these two that was not linked with the idea of home. Nothing of the jungle had been in their thoughts, though they had been tempted, and love and the moment's despair had stung them to take revenge in each other's arms; yet they had kept the narrow path. There was in their love something primeval, that belonged to the beginning of the world.

Orlando had almost reached the cross trails before he saw Mazarine's wagon standing in the way. At first he did not recognize the horses, and he called to the driver sitting motionless to move aside. He took it to be some drunken ranchman.

Presently, however, coming nearer, he recognized the horses and the man. Standing up, Orlando was about to call out again in peremptory tones, when, suddenly,

the spirit of death touched his senses, and his heart stood still for an instant.

As he looked at the motionless figure, he was only subconsciously aware of the thud of horses' hoofs coming down one of the side trails. Springing to the ground, he approached Mazarine's wagon.

The horses neighed; it was a curious, lonely sound. For a moment he stood with his hand on the wheel looking at the still figure; then he reached out and touched Mazarine's knee.

"Hi, there!" he said.

There was no reply. He mounted the wagon, touched the dead man's shoulder, and then, with one hand, loosened the waistcoat and felt the heart. It was still. He examined the body. There was no wound. He peered into the face, and saw the distortion there.

"Dead—dead!" he said in an awed voice.

The husband of Louise was dead. How he died, in one sense, did not matter. Louise's husband was dead; he would torture her no more. Louise was free!

Slowly he got down from the wagon, vaguely wondering what to do, so had the tragedy confused his brain for the moment. As he did so, he was conscious of another wagon and horses a few yards away.

"Who goes there?" called the voice of the newcomer.

"A friend," answered Orlando mechanically.

Presently the newcomer sprang down from his wagon and came over to Orlando.

"What is it, Mr. Guise?" he asked. "What's the trouble? . . . Who's that?" he added, pointing to the dead body.

"It's Mazarine. He's dead," answered Orlando quietly.

"Oh, good God!" said the other.

He was an insurance agent of the town of Askatoon, who, that very evening, had heard Orlando threaten the Master of Tralee—that if ever he passed him or met him, and Mazarine did not get out of the way, it would be the worse for him. Well, here in the trail were Orlando and Mazarine—and Mazarine was dead!

"Good God!" the newcomer repeated. Scarsdale was his name.

Then Orlando explained. "It's not what you think," he said. Then he told the story—such as there was to tell—of what had happened during the last few moments.

Scarsdale climbed up into the wagon, struck a light, looked at the body of Mazarine, at his face, and then lifted up the beard and examined the neck. There were finger-marks in the flesh.

"So, that's it," he said. "Strangled! He seems to have took it easy, sittin' there like that," he added as he climbed down.

"I don't understand it," remarked Orlando. "As you say, it's weird, his sitting there like that with the reins in his hands. I don't understand it!"

"I saw you getting down from the wagon," remarked Scarsdale meaningly.

"Say, do you really believe——?" began Orlando without agitation, but with a sudden sense of his own false position.

"It ain't a matter of belief," the other declared. "If there's an inquest, I've got to tell what I've seen. You know that, don't you?"

"That's all right," replied Orlando. "You've got to

tell what you've seen, and so have I. I guess the truth will out. Come, let's move him on to Tralee. We'll lay him down in the bottom of the wagon, and I'll lead his horses with a halter. . . . No," he added, changing his mind, "you lead my horses, and I'll drive him home."

A moment afterwards, as the procession made its way to Tralee, Scarsdale said to himself:

"He must have nerves like iron to drive Mazarine home, if he killed him. Well, he's got them, and still they call him Giggles as if he was a silly girl!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE SUPERIOR MAN

STUDENTS of life have noticed constantly that moral distinctions are not matters of principle but of certain peremptory rules founded on nice calculations of the social mind. In the field of crime, responsibility is most often calculated, not upon the crime itself, but upon how the thing is done.

In Askatoon, no one would have been greatly shocked if, when Orlando Guise and Joel Mazarine met at the railway-station or in the main street, Orlando had killed Mazarine.

Mazarine would have been dead in either case; and he would have been killed by another hand in either case; but the attitude of the public would not have been the same in either case. The public would have considered the killing of Mazarine before the eyes of the world justifiable homicide; its dislike of the man would have induced it to add the word *justifiable*.

But that Joel Mazarine should be killed by night without an audience, secretly—however righteously—shocked the people of Askatoon.

Had they seen the thing done, there would have been sensation, but no mystery; but night, secrecy, distance, mystery, all begot, not a reaction in Mazarine's favor, but a protest against the thing being done under cover, as it were, unhelped by popular observation. Also, to the Askatoon mind, that one man should kill another in open quarrel was courageous—or might be courageous

—but for one man to kill another, whoever that other was, in a hidden way, was a barbarous business.

It seemed impossible to have any doubt as to who killed the man, though Orlando had not waited a moment after the body had been brought to Tralee, but had gone straight to the police, and told what had happened, so far as he knew it. He stated the exact facts.

The insurance man, Scarsdale, would not open his mouth until the inquest, which took place on the afternoon after the crime had been committed. It was held at Tralee. Great crowds surrounded the house, but only a few found entrance to the inquest room.

Immediately on opening the inquest, Orlando was called to tell his story. Every eye was fixed upon him intently; every ear was strained as he described his coming upon the isolated wagon and the dead man with the reins in his hands. It is hard to say if all believed his story, but the coroner did, and Burlingame, his lawyer, also did.

Burlingame was present, not to defend Orlando, because it was not a trial, but to watch his interests in the face of staggering circumstantial evidence. To Burlingame's mind Orlando was not the man to kill another by strangling him to death. It was not in keeping with his character. It was too aboriginal.

The coroner believed the story solely because Orlando's frankness and straightforwardness filled him with confidence. Also men of rude sense, like Jonas Billings, were willing to take bets, five to one, that Orlando was innocent.

The Young Doctor had not an instant's doubt, but he could not at first fix his suspicions in a likely quarter. He had examined the body, and there were no marks save bruises at the throat. In his evidence he said that enor-

mous strength of hands had been necessary to kill so quickly, for it was clear the attack was so overpowering that there was little struggle.

The coroner here interposed a question as to whether it would have been possible for anyone but a man to commit the crime. At his words everybody moved impatiently. It was certain he was referring to the absent wife. The idea of Louise committing such a crime, or being able to commit it, was ridiculous. The coroner presently stated that he had only asked the question so as to remove this possibility from consideration.

The Young Doctor immediately said that probably no woman in the hemisphere could have committed the crime, which required enormous strength of hands.

The coroner looked round the room. "The widow, Mrs. Mazarine, is not here?" he said questioningly.

Nolan Doyle interposed. "Mrs. Mazarine is at my ranch," he said. "She came there yesterday evening at eight o'clock and remained in the presence of my wife and myself until twelve o'clock. The murder was committed before twelve o'clock. Mrs. Mazarine knows nothing of the crime. She does not even know that her husband is dead. She is not well to-day, and we have kept the knowledge from her."

"Is she under medical care?" asked the coroner.

Nolan Doyle nodded towards the Young Doctor, who said: "I saw Mrs. Mazarine at the house of Mr. Doyle last evening between the hours of eight and ten o'clock. To-day at noon also I visited her. She has a slight illness, and she is not fit to take part in these proceedings."

At this point, Scarsdale, who had come upon Orlando and the dead man at the cross trails the night before, told his story. He did it with evident reluctance.

He spoke with hesitation, yet firmly and straightforwardly. He described how he saw Orlando climb down from the wagon where the dead man was. He added, however, that he had seen no struggle of any kind, though he had seen Orlando close to the corpse. Questioned by a juror, he described the scenes between Orlando and Mazarine in the main street of Askatoon and at the railway station, both of which he had seen. He repeated Orlando's threat to Mazarine.

He was pressed as to whether Orlando showed agitation at the cross trails. He replied that Orlando seemed stunned but not agitated.

He was asked whether Orlando had shown the greater agitation at the cross trails or in the town when he threatened Mazarine. The answer was that he showed agitation only in the town. He was asked to repeat what Orlando had said to him. This he did accurately.

He was then asked by a juror whether he had arrived at any conclusion, when at the cross trails or afterwards, as to who committed the crime; but the coroner would not permit the question. The coroner added that it was the duty of the witness to state only what he had seen. Opinions were not permissible as evidence. The facts were in possession of the court, and the court could form its own judgment.

It was clear to everyone at this moment that the jury must return a verdict of wilful murder, and it was equally clear that the evidence was sufficient to fix suspicion upon Orlando, which must lead to his arrest. Two constables were in close attendance, and were ready to take charge of the man who, above all others, or so it was thought, had most reason to wish Mazarine out of the way. Indeed,

Orlando had resigned himself to the situation, having realized how all the evidence was against him.

Recalling Orlando, the coroner asked if it was the case that the death of Mazarine might be an advantage to him in any way. Orlando replied that it might be an advantage to him, but he was not sure. He added, however, that if, as the coroner seemed to suggest, he himself was under suspicion, it ought to appear to all that to have murdered Mazarine in the circumstances would have put in jeopardy any possible advantage. That seemed logical enough, but it was presently pointed out to the coroner that the same consideration had existed when Orlando had threatened Mazarine in the streets of Askatoon.

Presently the coroner said: "There's a half-breed woman and a Chinaman, servants of the late Mr. Mazarine. Have the woman called."

It was at this moment that the Young Doctor and Orlando also were suddenly seized with a suspicion of their own. Orlando remembered how Mazarine had horsewhipped and maltreated Li Choo. The Young Doctor fixed his eyes intently on the body, and presently went to it again, raised the beard and looked at the neck. Coming back to his place, he nodded to himself. He had a clue. Now he understood about the enormous strength which had killed Mazarine practically without a struggle. He had noticed more than once the sinewy fingers of the Chinaman. As the inquest went on, he had again and again looked at the hands and arms of Orlando, and it had seemed impossible that, strong as he was, his fingers had the particular strength which could have done this thing.

The coroner stood waiting for Rada to come, when

suddenly the door opened and a Chinaman entered—one of the two who had appeared so strangely on the scene the day before. He advanced to the coroner with both hands loosely hanging in the great sleeves of his blue padded coat, his eyes blinking slowly underneath the brown forehead and the little black skull-cap, and in curious, monotonous English with a quaint accent he said:

"Li Choo—Li Choo—he speak. He have to say. He send."

Holding up a piece of paper, he handed it to the coroner and then stood blinking and immobile.

A few moments afterwards, the coroner said: "I have received this note from Li Choo the Chinaman, sometime employed by the deceased Joel Mazarine. I will read it to the court." Slowly he read:

"I say gloddam. That Orlando he not kill Mazaline. I say gloddam Mazaline. That Mazaline he Chlistian. He says Chlist his brother. Chlist not save him when Li Choo's fingers had Mazaline's throat. That gloddam Mazaline I kill. That Mazaline kicked me, hit me with whip; where he kick, I sick all time. I not sleep no more since that time. That Louise, it no good she stay with Mazaline. Confucius speak like this: 'Young woman go to young man; young bird is for green leaves, not dry branch.' That Louise good woman; that Orlando hell-fellow good. I kill Mazaline—gloddam, with my hands I kill. You want know all why Li Choo kill? You want kill Li Choo? You come!"

As the coroner stopped reading, amid gasps of excitement, the Chinaman who had brought the note—with brown skin polished like a kettle, expressionless, save for the twinkling mystery of the brown eyes—made three

motions of obeisance up and down with his hands clasped in the great sleeves, and then said:

"He not come you; you come him. He gleat man. He speak all—come. I show where."

"Where is he?" asked the coroner.

The Chinaman did not reply for a moment. Then he said: "He saclifice before you take him. He gleat man —come." He slip-slopped towards the door as though confident he would be followed.

Two minutes afterwards the coroner, Orlando, the Young Doctor, Nolan Doyle and the rest stood at the low doorway of what looked like a great grave. It was, however, a big root-house used for storing vegetables in the winter time. It had not been used since Mazarine arrived at Tralee. Into this place, nor far from the house, Li Choo and his two fellow countrymen had gone the day before, when Mazarine, in his rage, had come forth with the horsewhip to punish the "Chinky," as Li Choo was familiarly known on the ranch.

As they arrived at the vault-like place in the ground, which would hold many tons of roots, another Chinaman came to the doorway. He was one of the two who, in their sudden coming and going, had seemed like magic people to Mazarine the day before. He made upward and downward motions of respect with clasped hands in the blue sleeves, and presently, in perfect English, he said:

"In one minute Li Choo will receive you. It is the moment of sacrifice. You wish him to die for the death of Mazarine. So be it. It is right for him to die. You will hang him; that is your law. He will not prevent you. He has told the truth, but he is making the sacrifice. When that is done you will enter and take him to prison."

The two constables standing beside the coroner made a move forward as though to show they meant to enforce the law without any palaver.

The Chinaman raised the palms of both hands at them. "Not yet," he said. Then he looked at the coroner. "You are master. Will you not prevent them?" he asked.

The coroner motioned the constables back. "All right," he said. "You seem to speak good English."

"I come from England—from Oxford University," answered the Chinaman with dignity. "I have learned English for many years. I am the son of Duke Ki. I came to see my uncle, the brother of Duke Ki. He is making sacrifice before you take him."

"Well, I'm blasted," said Jonas Billings from the crowd. "Chinese dukes, eh! What's it all about?"

"Reg'lar hocus-pocus," remarked the vagabond brother of Rigby the chemist.

At that moment little colored lights suddenly showed in the darkness of the root-house, and there was the tinkling of a bell. Then a voice seemed calling, but softly, with a long, monotonous, thrilling note.

"Many may not come," said the Chinaman at the door to the coroner, as he turned and entered the low doorway.

A minute afterwards the two constables held back the crowd from the doorway of the root-house, from the threshold of which a few wooden steps descended to the ground inside.

A strange sight greeted the eyes of those permitted to enter.

The root-house had been transformed. What had been a semi-underground place composed of scantlings, branches of trees and mother earth, with a kind of

vaulted roof, had been made into a sort of Chinese temple. All round the walls were hung curtains of black and yellow, decorated with dragons in gold, and above, suspended by cords at the four corners, was a rug or banner of white ornamented with a great tortoise—the sacred animal of Chinese religion—with gold eyes and claws. All round the sides of the room were set colored lights, shaded and dim. Coming from the bright outer sunlight, the place in its shadowed state seemed half-sepulchral.

When the coroner, Orlando, the Young Doctor and the others had accustomed themselves to the dimness, they saw at the end of the chamber—for such, in effect, it had been made with its trappings and decorations—a figure seated upon the ground. Near by the figure, on either hand, there were standards bearing banners, and the staffs holding the banners were bound in white silk, with long streamers hanging down. Half enclosing the banners were fanlike screens. Along the walls also were flags with toothed edges. The figure was seated on a mat of fine bamboo in the midst of this strange scheme of decoration. Behind him, and drawn straight across the chamber, was a sheet of fine white cloth, embroidered with strange designs. He was clothed in a rich jacket of blue, and a pair of sandal-like shoes was placed neatly in front of the bamboo mat. On either side and in front of all, raised a little from the ground, were bowls or calabashes containing fruit, grain and dried and pickled meats. It was all orderly, circumspect, weird and even stately, though the place was small. Finally, in front of the motionless figure, was a tiny brazier in which was a small fire.

Before the spectators had taken in the whole picture, the Chinaman who had entered with them came and stood on the right of the space occupied by the mat, near to the

banners and the screens, and under a yellow light which hung from the vaulted roof.

The figure on the fine bamboo mat was Li Choo, but not the Li Choo which Tralee and Askatoon had known. He was seated with legs crossed in Oriental fashion and with head slightly bowed. His face was calm and dignified. It had an impassiveness which made an interminable distance between him and those who had till now looked upon him as a poor Chinky, doing a roustabout's work on a ranch, the handy-man, the Jack-of-all-trades. Yet in spite of the menial work which he had done, it was now to be seen that the despised Li Choo had still lived his own life, removed by centuries and innumerable leagues from his daily slavery.

As they looked at him, brooding, immobile, strange, he lifted his head, and the excessive brightness of his black eyes struck with a sense of awe all who saw. It was absurd that Li Choo, the hireling, "Yellow-phiz," as he had also been called, should here command a situation with the authority of one who ruled.

Presently he spoke, not in broken English, but in Chinese. It was interpreted by the Chinaman standing on the right by the screens, in well cadenced, cultured English.

"I have to tell you," said Li Choo—the other's voice repeated the words after him—"that I am the son of greatness, of a ruler in my own land. It was by the Yang-tze-kiang, and there were riches and pleasant things in the days of my youth. In the hunt, at the tavern, I was first amongst them all. I had great strength. I once killed a bear with my bare hands. My hands had fame.

"I had office in the city where my cousin ruled. He was a bad man, and was soon forgotten, though his children mourn for him as is the custom. I killed him. He

gave counsel concerning the city when there was war, but his counsel was that of a traitor, and the city was lost. Now behold, it is written that he who has given counsel about the country or its capital should perish with it when it comes into peril. He would not die—so I killed him; but not before he had heaped upon me baseness and shame. So I killed him.

"Yet it is written that when a minister kills his ruler, all who are in office with him shall without mercy kill him who did the deed. That is the law. It was the word of the Son of Heaven that this should be. But those who were in office with me would not kill me, because they approved of what I did. Yet they must kill me, since it was the law. What was there to do but in the night to flee, so that they who should kill me might not obey the law? Had I remained, and they had not obeyed the law, they also would have been slain."

He paused for a moment and then went on: "So I fled, and it is many years since by the Yang-tze-kiang I killed my ruler and saved my friends. Yet I had not been faithful to the ancient law, and so through the long years I have done low work among a low people. This was for atonement, for long ago by the Yang-tze-kiang I should have died, and behold, I have lived until now. To save my friends from the pain of killing me I fled and lived; but at last here at this place I said to myself that I must die. So, secretly, I made this cellar into a temple.

"That was a year ago, and I sent to my brother the Duke Ki to speak to him what was in my mind, so that he might send my kinsmen to me, that when I came to die it should be after the manner ordained by the Son of Heaven; that my body should be clothed according to the ancient rites by my own people, my mouth filled with

rice, and the meats and grains and fruits of sacrifice be placed on a mat at the east of my body when I died; that the curtain should be hung before my corpse; that I should be laid upon a mat of fine bamboo, and dressed, and prepared for my grave, and put into a noble coffin as becomes a superior man. Did not the Son of Heaven say that we speak of the *end* of a superior man, but we speak of the *death* of a small man? I was a superior man, but I have lived as a small man these many days; and now, behold, I am drawing near to my end as a superior man.

"I wished that nothing should be forgotten; that all should be done when I, of the house of the Duke Ki, came to my superior end. So these my kinsmen came, these of my family, to be with me at my going, to call my spirit back from the roof-top with face turned to the north, to leap before my death-mat, to wail and bare the shoulders and bind the sackcloth about the head.

"I have served among the low people doing low things, and now I would die, but in the correct way. Once to the listeners Confucius said: 'The great mountain must crumble; the strong beam must break; the wise man must wither away like a plant.' So it is. It is my duty to go to my end, for the time is far spent, and I should do what my friends must have done had I stayed in my ancestral city."

Again he paused, and now he rocked his body backwards and forwards for a moment; then presently he continued: "Yet I would not go without doing good. There should be some act among the low people by which I should be remembered. So, once again, I killed a man. He could not withstand the strength of my fingers—they were like steel upon his throat. As a young man my fingers were like those of three men.

"Shall a man treat his wife as she, Louise, was treated? Shall a man raise his hand against his wife, and live? Also, was he to live—the low man—that struck a high man like me with his hands, with the whip, with his feet, stamping upon me on the ground? Was that to be, and he live? Were the young that should have but one nest to be parted, to have only sorrow, if Joel lived? So I killed him with my hands" (he slightly raised his clasped hands, as though to emphasize what he said, but the gesture was grave and quiet) "—so I killed him, and so I must die.

"It was the duty of my friends to kill me by the Yang-tze-kiang. It is your duty, you of the low people, to kill me who has killed a low man; but my friends by the Yang-tze-kiang were glad that the ruler died, and you of the low people are glad that Joel is dead. Yet it is your duty to kill me. . . . But it shall not be."

He quickly reached out his hands and drew the burning brazier close to his feet; then, suddenly, from a sleeve of his robe he took a little box of the sacred tortoise-shell, pressed his lips to it, opened it, poured its contents upon the flame, leaned over with his face close to the brazier and inhaled the little puff of smoke that came from it.

So for a few seconds—and then he raised himself and sat still with eyes closed and hands clasped in his long sleeves. Presently his head fell forward on his breast.

A pungent smell passed through the chamber. It produced for the moment dizziness in all present. Then the sensation cleared away. The Chinaman at the right of Li Choo looked steadfastly at him; then, all at once, he bared his shoulders and quickly bound a piece of sackcloth round his head. This done, he raised his voice and cried out with a curious, monotonous ululation, and at once a second voice cried out in a long wailing call.

Outside Li Choo's kinsman, with his face turned to the north, was calling his spirit back, though ke knew it would not come.

At the first sound of the voice crying outside, the Chinaman beside Li Choo leaped thrice in front of the brazier, the mat and the motionless body.

At that moment the Young Doctor came forward. He who had leaped stood between him and the body of Li Choo.

"You must not come. Li Choo, the superior man, is dead," he protested.

"I am a doctor," was the reply. "If he is dead, the law will not touch him, and you shall be alone with him, but the law must know that he is dead. That is the way that prevails among the 'low people,'" he added ironically.

The Chinaman stood aside, and the Young Doctor stooped, felt the pulse, touched the heart and lifted up the head and looked into Li Choo's sightless eyes.

"He is dead," he said, and he came back again to the coroner and the others. "Let's get out of this," he added. "He is beyond our reach now. No need for an inquest here. He has killed himself." Then he caught Orlando's hand in a warm grip.

As they left the chamber, the kinsman of Li Choo was gently laying the body down upon the bamboo mat. At the doorway the other son of the Duke Ki was still monotonously calling back the departed spirit. . . .

The inquest on Joel Mazarine was ended presently, and Nolan Doyle and the Young Doctor set out to tell Louise that a "low man," once her husband, had paid a high price for all that he had bought of the fruits of life out of due season.

CHAPTER XVIII

YOUTH HAS ITS WAY

"Aw, Doctor dear, there's manny that's less use in the wurruld than Chinamen, and I'd like to see more o' them here-away," remarked Patsy Kernaghan to the Young Doctor in the springtime of another year. "Stren'th of mind is all right, but stren'th of fingers is better still."

"You're a bloodthirsty pagan, Patsy," returned the Young Doctor.

"Hell to me sowl, then, didn't Li Choo pull things straight? I'm not much of a murd'ring man meself—I haven't the stren'th with me fingers, but there's manny a time I'd like to do what Li Choo done. . . . Shure, I don't want to be sp'akin' ill of the dead, but look at it now. There was ould Mazarine, breakin' the poor child's heart, as fine a fella as iver trod the wurruld achin' for her, and his life bein' spoilt by the goin's on at Tralee. Then in steps the Chinky and with stren'th of mind and stren'th of fingers puts things right."

"No, no, Patsy, you've got bad logic and worse morals in your head. As you say, things were put right, but trouble enough came of it."

"Divils me darlin', Doctor, it was bound to come all right some time. Shure, wasn't it natural the child should be all crumpled up like and lose her head for a while? Wasn't it natural she should fight out agin' takin' the property the leviathan left her, whin she knew there was another will he'd spoke on a paper to the lawyer the night he died, though he hadn't signed it? And isn't it so that yourself it was talked her round!"

The Young Doctor waved a hand reprovingly, but Patsy continued:

"Now, lookin' back on it, don't ye think it was clever enough what you said till her? 'Do justice to yourself and to others, little lady,' sez you. 'Be just—divide the place up; give two-thirds of it away to the children of Joel's first two wives and keep one-third, which is yours by law in anny case. For why should it be that you should give iverythin' and get nothin'? He had the best of you—of your girlhood and your youth,' sez you. 'Shure y'are entitled to bread and meat, and a roof over you, as a wife, and as one that got nothin' from your married life of what ought to be got by honest girls like you, or by anny woman, if it comes to that,' sez you. Aw, shure then, I know you said it, because, didn't she tell it all to Norah Doyle, and didn't Norah tell Nolan, and me sittin' by and glad enough that the cleverest man betune here and the other side of the wurruld talked her round! Aw, how you talk, y'r anner! Shure, isn't it the wonder that you don't talk the dead back to the wurruld out of which you help them? I might ha' been a great man meself"—he grinned—"if I'd had your eddication, but here I am, a 'low man,' as Li Choo said, takin' me place simple as a babe."

"Patsy, you save my life," remarked the Young Doctor. "You save my life daily. That's why I'm glad you're getting a good home at last."

"At Slow Down Ranch, with her that's to be its queen! Well, isn't that like her to be thinkin' of others? As a rule the rich is so busy lookin' afther what they've got that they're not worryin' about the poor; but she thought of me, didn't she?"

The Young Doctor nodded, and Patsy pursued his tale.

"Haven't I see her day in, day out, at Nolan Doyle's ranch, and don't I understan' why it is she's not set foot in Tralee since the ould one left it feet foremost, for his new seven-foot home, housed in a bit of wood—him that had had the run of the wurruld? She'll set no foot in Tralee at all anny time, if she can help it—that's the breed of her.

"Well, it is as it is, and what's goin' to be will plaze every mother's son in Askatoon. Giggles they called him! A bit of a girl they thought him! What's he turned out to be, though he's giggling still? Why, a man that's got the double cinch on Askatoon. Even that fella Burlingame has nothin' to say ag'in' him; and when Burlingame hasn't anny mud to throw, then you must stop and look hard. Shure, the blessed Virgin, or the Almighty himself, couldn't escape the tongue of Augustus Burlingame —not even you."

The Young Doctor burst out laughing. "'The blessed Mary, or the Almighty himself—not even you!' Well, Patsy, you're a wonder," he said.

"Aw, you're not goin' to get off by scoffin' at me," remarked Patsy. "Shure, what did Augustus Burlingame say of you—well now, what did he say?"

"Yes, Patsy, what was it?" urged the other.

"Shure, he criticized you. He called you 'Squills,' and said you'd helped more people intil the wurruld than out of it."

"You call that criticism, Patsy?"

"Whichever way you look at it, hasn't it an ugly face? Is it a kindness to man to bring him into the wurruld? That's wan way of lookin' at it. But suppose he meant the other thing, that not being married, you——"

"Patsy Kernaghan," interjected the Young Doctor

sternly, "you're not fit company. Take care, or there'll be no Slow Down Ranch for you. An evil mind——"

Now it was Patsy's turn to interrupt: "Watch me now, I think that wan of the most beautiful things I iver saw was them two young people comin' together. Five long months it was afther Mazarine was put away before she spoke with him. It was in the gardin at Nolan's ranch, and even then it wasn't aisy till her. Not that she didn't want to see him all the time; not, I'll be bound, that she didn't say, when you and Nolan first told her the mastodon was dead, 'Thank God, I'm free!' But, there he was, flung out of the wurruld without a minute's notice, and with the black thing in his heart. Shure, you'll be understandin' it a thousand times better than meself, y'r anner."

He took a pinch of snuff from a little box, offered it to the Young Doctor and continued his story.

"Well, as I said, whin five months had gone by they met. By chanct I saw the meetin'. Watch me now, I'll tell you how it was. She was sittin' on a bench in the gardin, lookin' in front of her and seein' nothin' but what was in her mind's eye, and who can tell what she would be seein'! There she sat sweet as a saint, very straight up, the palms of her hands laid on the bench on either side, as though they was supportin' her—like a statue she looked. I watched her manny a minute, but she niver moved. Well, there she was, lookin'—lookin' in front o' her, whin round the big tree in the middle of the gardin he come and stood forninst her. They just looked and looked at each other without a word. Like months it seemed. They looked, and looked, as though they was tryin' to read some story in each other's eyes, and then she give a kind of joyful moan, and intil his arms she went like a nestlin' bird.

"He raised up her head, and—well, now, y'r anner, I niver saw anything I liked better. There niver had been a girl in his life, and there niver was a man in hers—not one that mattered, till they two took up with each other, and it's a thing—well, y'r anner, I'd be a proud man if I could write it down. It's a story that'd take its place beside the ancient ones."

The Young Doctor looked at Patsy meditatively. "Patsy," said he, "the difference between the north and the south of Ireland is that in the south they are all poets——" He paused.

"Well, you haven't finished, y'r anner," said Kernaghan.

"And in the north they think they are," continued the Young Doctor. "I'd like to see those two as your eyes in front of your mind saw them, Patsy."

"Aw, well then, you couldn't do it, Doctor dear, for you've niver been in love. Shure, there's no heart till ye!" answered the Irishman, and took another pinch of snuff with a flourish.

Flamingo-like in her bright-colored, figured gown, with a wild flower in her hair and her gray curls dancing gently at her temples, a little old lady trotted up and down the big sitting room of Slow Down Ranch, talking volubly and insistently. One ironically minded would have said she chirruped, for her words came out in not unmusical, if staccato, notes, and she shook her shriveled, ringed fingers reprovingly at a stalwart young man.

Once or twice, as she seemed to threaten him with what the poet called "the slow, unmoving finger of scorn," he giggled. It was evident that he was at once amused and troubled. This voice had cherished and chided him

all his life, and he could measure accurately what was behind it. It was a wilful voice. It had the insistence which power gives, and to a woman—or to most women—power is either money or beauty, since, in the world as it is, office and authority are denied them. Beauty was gone from the face of the ancient dame, but she still had much money, and, on rare occasions, it gave her a little touch of arrogance. It did so now as she admonished her beloved son, who would at any time have renounced fortune, or hope of fortune, for some wilful idea of his own. A less sordid modern did not exist.

He was not very effective in the contest of tongues between his mother and himself. As the talk went on he foresaw that he was to be beaten; yet he persisted, for he loved a joy-wrangle, as he called it, with his mother. He had argued with her many a time, just to see her in a harmless passion, and note how the youth of her came back, giving high color to the wrinkled face, and how the eyes shone with a brightness which had been constant in them long ago. They were now quarrelling over that ever-fruitful cause of antagonism—the second woman in the life of a man. Yet, strange to say, the flamingo-like Eugénie Guise was fighting for the second woman, not against her.

"I'll say it all again and again and again till you have sense, Orlando," she declared. "Your old mother hasn't lived all these years for nothing. I'm not thinking of you; I'm thinking of her." She pointed towards the door of another room, from which came sounds of laughter—happy laughter—in which a man's and a woman's voices sounded. "On the day she comes into this house—and that's the day after to-morrow—I shall go. I'll stand at the door and welcome you, and see you have a good

wedding-breakfast and that it all goes off grand, then I shall vanish."

Orlando made a helpless gesture of the hand. "Well, mother, as I said, it will make us both unhappy—Louise as much as me. You and I have never been parted except for a few weeks at a time, and I'm sure I don't know how I could stand it."

"Rather late to think about it," the other returned. "You can't have two women spoiling you in one house and being jealous of each other—oh, you needn't toss your fingers! Even two women that love each other can't bear the competition. Just because I love her and want her to be happy, off I go to your Aunt Amelia to live with her. She's poor, and I'll still have someone to boss as I've bossed you. I never knew how much I loved Amelia till she got sick last year when everything terrible was happening here. I'm going, Orlando——

"Two birds hopping on one branch
Would kill the joy of Slow Down Ranch——

"There, I made that up on the moment. It's true, even if it is poetry."

"It isn't poetry, mother," was the reply, and there was an ironical look in Orlando's eyes. "Poetry's the truth of life," he hastened to add carefully, "and it's not poetry to say that you could be a kill-joy."

The little lady tossed her head. "Well, you'll never have a chance to prove it, for I'm taking the express East on the night of your wedding. That's settled. Amelia needs me, and I'm going to her. . . . Your wedding-present will be the ranch and a hundred thousand dollars," she added.

"You're the sun-dried fruit of Paradise, Mother," Orlando said, taking her by the arms.

"I heard the Young Doctor call me a bird of Paradise once," she returned. "People don't know how sharp my ears are. . . . But I never stored it up against him. Taste is born in you, and if people haven't got it in the cradle, they never have it. I suppose *his* mother went around in a black alpaca and wore her hair like a wardress in a jail. I'm sorry for him—that's all."

"Suppose I should get homesick for you and run away from her!" remarked Orlando slyly.

"Run away *with* her to me," chirruped Eugénie, with a vain little laugh.

Suddenly her manner changed, and she looked at her son with dreamy intensity. "You are so wonderfully young, my dear," she said, "and I am very old. I had much happiness with your father while he lived. He was such a wise man. Always he gave in to me in the little things, and I gave in to him in all the big things. He almost made me a sensible woman."

There was a strange wistfulness in her face. Through all the years, down beneath everything, there had been the helpless knowledge in her own small, garish mind that she had little sense; now she realized that she was given a chance to atone for all her pettiness by doing one great sensible thing.

Orlando was about to embrace her, but she briskly turned away. She could not endure that. If he did it, the pent-up motherhood would break forth, and her courage would take flight. She was something more than the "parokeet of Pernambukoko," as Patsy Kernaghan had called her.

She went to the door of the other room. "I want to talk to the Young Doctor about Amelia," she said. "He's clever, and perhaps he could give her a good prescription.

I'll send Louise to you. It's nicer courting in this room where you can see the garden and the grand hills. You're going to give Louise the little gray mare you lassooed last year, aren't you? I always think of Louise when I look at that gray mare. You had to break the pony's heart before she *could* be what she is—the nicest little thing that ever was broken by a man's hand; and Louise, she had to have her heart broken, too. Your father and I were almost of an age—he was two years older, and we had our youth together. And you and Louise are so wonderfully young, too. Be good to her, son. She's never been married. She was only in prison with that old lizard. What a horrible mouth he had! It's shut now," she added remorselessly. Opening the door of the other room, she disappeared.

A moment later, Louise entered upon Orlando.

The vanished months had worked wonders in her. She was like the young summer beyond the open windows, alive to her finger-tips, shyly radiant, with shining eyes, yet in their depths an alluring pensiveness never to leave them altogether. Knowledge had come to her; an apprehending soul was speaking in her face. The sweetness of her smile, as she looked at the man before her, was such as could only be distilled from the bitter herbs of the desert.

"Oh, Orlando!" she said joyously, as she came forward.

JORDAN IS A HARD ROAD

JORDAN IS A HARD ROAD

CHAPTER I

THE COMING OF MINDEN

"WHAT do *you* think of it, Doctor?"

The Young Doctor had just stepped from his buggy in front of the drug store in the main street of Askatoon. The quizzical question was followed by a round of laughter from a half-dozen noon-timers.

"I think it's mental deficiency," satirically answered the Young Doctor, who, though dusty from his drive and weary of face and mind from a long vigil at a bedside and a twenty-mile drive, was cheerful and dryly playful as ever. He had no idea what was the subject of their talk.

"Shure, it looks like it," said old Patsy Kernaghan, "for what would he be doin' here annyway?"

"What would who be doin' here, Patsy?" asked the Young Doctor, with the look of one who suffered fools gladly, and for some reason suffered this fool more gladly than others.

Patsy bridled up. "Bill Minden—that's who! An' the top of his head must be gone an' the inside of his mind, that he'd be settlin' here. What would he be doin' here but watchin' the wheat grow—though to be sure there's three trains a day, an' it's a sight to see y'r anner busy in the lambin' season!"

This last reference to the Young Doctor's activity in shepherding the passage of new arrivals into the world, and incidentally into Askatoon, brought a roar of laughter.

"Well, you'll not be thinkin' much of lambin' yourself, Patsy," responded the Young Doctor. "Whatever Mr. William Minden does, at your age and in your debased state of health yourself'll be only thinking of black horses with long tails and a carriage for one." He always put on a slight Irish brogue when talking to Patsy Kernaghan.

"Aw, no, Doctor, dear," drawled the old man, "let thim ride behind the black horses as never rode before. I'll be gettin' to me long home in a wheelbarra. There's more than one of thim that's got safe past you 'll be glad to help put out o' sight what you've left of me."

"No, no, I'll keep you alive just to hear you talk in the foreign language you call your mother-tongue, Patsy," smiled the Young Doctor, having tied the halter of his gray mare to the hitching-post by the sidewalk. "But who is Mr. William Minden, and where does he come from?"

Two or three of the group sniggered and winked at each other; for who had not heard of Bill Minden, the notorious train and stage-coach robber, who faithfully kept the Sabbath day holy and as faithfully made unholy every other day of the week, when it served his purpose so to do? They knew that the Young Doctor loved to hear Patsy Kernaghan talk, for they both had come from the Emerald Isle.

"*Mr.* William Minden!" remarked Patsy, scornfully. "Is it ye want to insult a stranger in the place?—I ask ye that. The wide wurruld knows Bill Minden as Bill Minden, without anny handle to his name and no *William* at all."

"Never heard of him," retorted the Young Doctor. "What's he done? Who is he?"

"Never h'ard of him!" exclaimed Kernaghan.

"Never h'ard of Bill Minden! Wasn't it two years ago he stuck up the express down in Oregon? Didn't he rob the stage-coach a year ago at Lancy, and didn't——"

"That wasn't proved," interjected a voice.

"An' the express business wasn't proved aither," declared Kernaghan; "an' afther Bill left the court with tears in his beautiful eyes and not a stain on his character, didn't he own up to it, and give five hundred dollars to an orphan children's home! Always doin' that kind of thing, isn't he, Father Roche? I'll say that of him, although he's a Protis'ant," he added with the air of doing a brave thing.

He had addressed his last words to a new arrival in the group round him—a priest, the much-beloved priest who guarded and guided his very small Catholic flock at Askatoon.

"Ah, yes, yes, Kernaghan. He also gave five hundred dollars to the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament for the poor at Portland at the same time," responded Father Roche, who smilingly acknowledged the salutations of the crowd.

"Thoughtful William," remarked the Young Doctor, shaking hands with Father Roche. "We could find use for his sympathies at Askatoon if he came our way."

Patsy threw up his hands. "Come our way! Aw, Doctor, dear, what've I been sayin' all this time but that Bill Minden's here—here now in Askatoon! Settled here—come to stay—brought his ox and his ass, an' everything that's his."

"Or not, as the case may be," rejoined the Young Doctor. "Where is he camped?"

"Shure, he's at the Sunbright Hotel—where else would a rich man like him be stayin'?" remarked Kernaghan.

The Young Doctor looked at Kernaghan quizzically. "Now how do you know he's rich? Seen the inside of his till, eh?"

Kernaghan grinned. "Aw, Doctor, does annyone think a man that's opened as manny tills as Bill Minden wouldn't have a full one of his own?"

"And what do you think he's come here for?" continued the Young Doctor. "You have a great head, Patsy. Now give it a chance. What is Bill Minden, the train robber, doing in Askatoon?"

Patsy reflected a minute, scratching his head behind the ear. "Well, there's manny a busy man that's never had time to look at himself, an' he just steals away somewhere to a backwater to see his own face."

Father Roche smiled broadly. "Solitude and repentance—is that it, Kernaghan?"

Before Patsy could reply, Jonas Billings, the livery-stable keeper, intervened. "Say, you call Askatoon a backwater, do you? Nothin' doin', eh? You'll get yourself disliked, Kernaghan, my friend."

"Shure, wouldn't it seem like a backwater to Minden?" answered Patsy. "A man that's used to stoppin' a train or holdin' up a stage-coach'd think Askatoon was a cimetairy."

"Has anyone seen him?" asked the Young Doctor. "What sort of a looking man is he?"

One or two mouths opened, but Patsy was not to be denied.

"Seen him! Isn't his face as well known as that of the Pope? Hasn't his fortygraf been in the papers for manny a year? Didn't I see him meself step aff the train here, an' didn't I look to see if he'd carry it away with him, ingine and all? Didn't I see him onct in Vancouver?

What's he like? Well, his head's as big as a cushion, as black as jet—not a gray hair annywhere. Did ye ivir see pictures of the Dook o' Norfolk? That's a fine man and a good Cat'lic. Well, Bill Minden's like the Dook o' Norfolk, with a big black, bushy beard, spread out more than the Dook's, with beautiful black, bushy eyebrows that the Dook'd have, too, if he let his grow—shure, I saw the Dook wance when he come to Maynooth. About five foot eight Bill is—a bit higher than the Dook; but whin it comes to shoulders—aw, well, there y'are, the Dook just draps away to nawthing at all, an' he's got a fine chist, too. Bill has a chist like a house, and a head like the cupoly at the tap of St. Peter's at Rome. Fee, fo, fi, fum, I smell the blood of an Englishmun! Aw, it's a gran' sight to look at him. None o' your sky-scrapers, but somethin' like the fellow they called Atlas that carried the wurruld on his back—a hell of a fine fellow. Aw, there, I beg your pardon, Father Roche. Heaven's own boy, that's what Bill Minden is, physically and in fidoosary terms, as it were, but as aisy and swate—aw, you'd be thinkin' he was the father of fourteen children all of 'em girls, a-risin' his eyebrows and smilin' at ye as if ye was his long-lost brother. 'Ah, Patsy Kernaghan,' sez he to me whin I mentioned me name to him, 'might I ask if y'are Irish?' sez he."

He could get no further. A burst of laughter shook the crowd.

"Patsy," said the Young Doctor, solemnly, "I am surprised at the question he asked you. It's evident Mr. Minden's sight and hearing are failing."

Patsy waved a hand at them all contemptuously. "How could he know I was Irish without bein' told? Is it because there's anny green in me eye? Had I a

shillaly, or had I a pipe in me hat? Was the man the Almighty that he should see the source of a man's nativity? He's a fine man that—whativer his past, he's a fine man. What was the first wurrd he asked me afther I told him I was Irish? 'Which is the way to the Cat'lic Church?' he sez to me, an' I told him. 'Which is the way to the hotel?' he sez to me—'to the Sunbright Hotel?' he sez to me—an' I told him."

"Yes, but which way did he go?" asked the Young Doctor.

"He wint to the hotel—the man had to have a bed and a meal, hadn't he? But it shows the heart of him whin he asks his way to the Cat'lic Church first."

"I have not noticed him in the vicinity," interjected Father Roche, with mild irony.

"Bill Minden ain't a Catholic," grunted Jonas Billings, the keeper of the livery-stable. "Say, I remember him on the Siwash River ten years ago. He's a Protes'ant, but he don't hold by church goin'. I've seen him sit right out on the stoop in front of the Mosquito Hotel at Siwash Junction on a Sunday mornin' readin' his Bible with a church not three hundred yards away, holdin' his own meetings. He'd sit there all mornin' readin' the Bible—the Old Testament it was; and p'raps sometimes he'd let out some commentory on what he read—maybe about Elijah or Nebuchadnezzar or Boaz or Daniel or Abr'am, an' he wouldn't have any argyment about it. He'd just lay down the law an' ye had to take it. He carries that little black Bible round with him wherever he goes. He'd read it on a Sunday morning solemn and satisfied, and on a Monday night he'd stick up a train all alone—walk right through a car scoopin' jewels and cash as he went. I suppose readin' on a Sunday

mornin' about Saul and David havin' killed their thousands and their tens of thousands give him the courage to spoil the Philistines on a Monday night. Nobody ever laughed at Bill for doin' what he done. It wasn't pretendin'. It suited him; he gloated on it; it was wine and milk to him. When he was in jail at Portland the learned, holy doctors used to come to convert him. Say, what a surprise for them when Bill turned his guns on 'em from Deuteronomy to Malachi. He massacreed them with his tongue 'fore they knew where they were. Start him on the Old Testament, get him in the gates of the holy places here in Askatoon, and see what he'll do. Why, that Bill Minden, train robber and roadman, knows the Bible from Genesees to Luke, same as I know the road to Starwart's saloon. Catholic! Bill Minden a Catholic? Catholics don't read Bibles, beggin' Father Roche's pardon. They go to Mass; they listen to the voice of holy inspiration in the church. If I'm asked, I say Bill's a Unitarian. He's a Mount Moriah man, not an Olivet persuader. If you've got it in your mind that he didn't mean his Bible-reading as real when he done it, you'll have to get it into your mind that he didn't mean stickin' up a coach when he done it. If he oughtn't to go to Heaven for reading the Bible because it wasn't real, then he oughtn't to go to jail for stickin' up the train. Ez fur ez I can make out, Bill Minden's real—all wool, and two yards wide."

"Then what's he doin' in Askatoon?" remarked Rigby, the chemist, in the doorway, at which there was laughter unchecked.

The Young Doctor fanned himself with his straw hat and looked musingly at Kernaghan. "Patsy," said he, "we've got a problem here; it's the problem of sitting

on both sides of a fence at once. From Bill Minden's past habits I gather that here at Askatoon we'll find him painting the town red on a Monday, and visiting the hospital, the jail, the prayer-meeting and the schools on a Tuesday. So far as I can see he'll have two mottoes. One will be, 'Licensed to drink wine, beer and other spirituous and fermented liquors,' and the other will be, 'Home, sweet Home.' Patsy, we shall have to keep an eye on Mr. William Minden."

Patsy nodded. "Faith, that's so. Now what was the first thing he done after he got to the hotel? The first thing he done was to march straight aff to the school —to the Central School. So you're right, Doctor dear. An' I wint with him—that's to say I wint behind him, walkin' in his wake. There he stood and watched the children comin' out of school—shure, it was only an hour ago. An' he smiled at thim an' patted their heads an' give away—aw, well, he give away twenty or thirty five-cint pieces. Whin Miss Finley, the head teacher, come out—that's a fine girl, Cora Finley, a beautiful, strappin' girl, with handsome face an' an eye that'd light up an underground cave—whin she passed him standin' by the gate, he raised his hat agin her, an' as nice a word he spoke of good-day-to-ye as iver was spoke annywhere. Thin he watched her, and watched her after she'd laughed back an answer at him, till she was out of sight by turnin' the corner. Now a man that'll do that, that'll just go straight to a schoolhouse almost before he's had time to take aff his boots in the town, well, that's a man ye'll have to think about twice. It's my opinion he'll be an outstandin' figure in the place."

"Let's hope he won't be a figure in an outstanding debt," remarked Father Roche quietly.

"Aw, there's manny a Protis'ant that's a good man—savin' your prisince," replied Patsy, turning to Father Roche and misreading his mind.

"Do you know, Father Roche," said the Young Doctor musingly, "if we only knew exactly why a man did some certain thing in his life—perhaps some very small thing—we should know his whole character. Now, perhaps, if we knew exactly why Bill Minden went to that school this afternoon, we should have a Book of Revelations."

"Well, there he is now. You can ask him," declared Patsy. "There he is on the other side of the street."

Slowly, with a kind of loose dignity and yet with a smack of assertion, too, owing to a curious bending of the legs as he walked, with that in it of a cavalry officer's stride, Bill Minden was coming down the other side of the street. There was something self-contained and self-sufficient about him, yet there was nothing repellent. Indeed, there was a unique kindliness—the kindliness of a chieftain or a patriarch—in the expression of his hard-bitten face. He took no notice of the crowd watching him, and appeared not to see them. On the other side of the street, almost opposite the group of gossips, were a horse and buggy. On the seat of the buggy was a dog of some size and marked ferocity of appearance. While Minden was passing the buggy he stepped towards it, and held out his hand as though to stroke the dog. A voice behind him suddenly called out, "Don't touch him, he'll bite," as the sullen brute raised its head. Without an instant's hesitation Minden's hand went quietly out above the dog's body as he murmured something, and then slowly found the head and ears. The action had been very swift yet gentle, and the voice had been monotonously even, with a curious, rough melody. Presently the snarl left the dog's

mouth, the teeth ceased to show, and he wagged his tail as Minden turned with a smile to its terrified owner.

"Like a dog I had once," he said, and moved on.

As he did so, Jonas Billings shouted, "Hurrah!"

Minden turned, and many hands were waved in greeting across the street towards him. He waved a reply nonchalantly, and passed on his way.

CHAPTER II

THE REASON WHY

The good humor which marked Minden's entrance into the life of Askatoon continued through the months that followed. His habits were commendable. He neither drank nor chewed tobacco—the mark of the "tough"—and even his enemies were forced to admit that his outer conduct was above suspicion. He interested himself conspicuously in good works, though, in spite of his apparent honest sympathy, there was a feeling abroad that his entry into this field was like the invasion of a millinery shop by a buffalo. That, however, did not prevent every friend of every charity from "bleeding" him successfully. It was noted that never but once did he go to church or meeting. He had asked Patsy Kernaghan the way to the Catholic Church on the day of his arrival, but there the matter ended, though Patsy still regarded the incident with almost superstitious reverence. Of a Sunday morning, at the Sunbright Hotel, however, Minden sat on the verandah wearing his best coat and adorned by a collar; at other times, because of his huge beard, he wore nothing so useless as a collar; and in the presence of all and sundry he read his black leather-bound Bible. There was no lurking irony or self-consciousness in his looks as he entered upon or as he continued his task. It was done as naturally as eating a meal, and he took no notice of those who gazed at him. If, however, some natural son of Adam engaged him in talk on some scriptural topic—particularly of the Old Testament—he did not fail to lay down the sacred law according to William Minden assisted by the prophets, major and minor.

Once only a stranger ventured to scoff. He had come from the Border, had cheered himself with pregnant refreshment, and had then begun to chaff the quiescent Bill. At last he asked Bill to give him a tip for the heavenly race, and added that Jordan was a hard road to travel. Whereupon Bill rose, laid down his Bible gently and said, "You shall have a tip, my son," and with his foot catching the feet and ankle of the scoffer tipped him over the verandah rail into a barrel of rain-water. As the scoffer scrambled out, raging and bedraggled, Bill, leaning over the verandah, said, "You poisonous pimp of the pampas, if it wasn't the Sabbath I'd carve your cursed cuticle!"

Though the phrases Bill used were so sensationally picturesque, and gave signs of finished preparation, they were, on the contrary, impromptu. They represented a natural gift, developed by long practice, for manufacturing strange phrases and oaths which had ornamented Bill's past progress. This gift of alliterative decoration was a real asset in his life at Askatoon. It had been used at first privately, but it ultimately achieved him a reputation at a public meeting called in the interest of cheaper freight rates on the railway. There his choice of phrases, happily emphasized by a little polite profanity, started him on a popular career as a public man. There were those who opposed his progress, but they were highly religious people, mostly newcomers from the east, who regarded his criminal career with horror, and who disbelieved that a man with such a past could be trusted until he had been officially saved by divine grace. Joined with them in this feeling was the mother of Cora Finley, the young teacher to whom Minden had spoken on the day of his arrival.

Mrs. Finley had set her face against Minden ever since Cora came home telling of the strange but interesting man who had watched her and the school children leave the school, the day's work done. Mrs. Finley's agitation when she afterwards saw Minden, and her subsequent marked antipathy, might reasonably have been due to the fact that she was very religious and resented the interest he took in the schools, and, incidentally, in her popular offspring.

There was nothing pronounced in Minden's interest in the girl. He was always respectful to her, indeed almost ostentatiously so; and though he visited other schools regularly, he visited the Central School which she commanded far more often than any other. Recitations were part of each Friday's programme in the schools, and he not only listened to these recitations, but at last told stories himself, yarns of his own life, expurgated of what the scientists call "foreign matter," free from all taint or suggestion. They were adventures of surprising interest—sensational incidents clothed in his own vernacular, decorated by his alliterative facility. A close observer would have noticed that whilst he was thus engaged, though he appeared not to look at Cora (who welcomed his coming each week with almost unreasonable pleasure), he seemed yet to be conscious when her eyes were on him, or when her attention was diverted, knowing all she did by feeling rather than by sight.

There were parents who objected to these visitations, but the majority, "tickled," as they colloquially said, at an ex-criminal and wild adventurer playing the part of school visitor, cheerfully supported him and put to rout his critics. One day, however, something made him more than ever the talk of the town. It was the announcement

that he would stand for the office of school-trustee. It was made only a few days before the election for trustees, and not in all the days that Askatoon had known was there such a day as that in which the election occurred. He was determined to have the right to visit the schools with or without the approval of the "prim, pious pedantics," as he called them.

"I see what's in his mind," said Patsy Kernaghan to the Young Doctor.

"You have a wonderful eye, Patsy," responded the other. "There's no good of us wearing clothes at all; you see right through us."

Patsy scratched the top of his head with his thumb. "Aw, Doctor, dear, it's only a fleabite to what Bill Minden means to do. If he gets in as trustee—an' he will, for there's not twenty women in the place'll go agin' him, an' ivery man as is a man will go for him—then he'll stand for mayor an' run the damn place like a switchman at a junction. He won't talk; he'll just pull the lever, and there it'll all be done what he wants done, as aisy as aisy. He'll want the Education Committee to go on this track; he'll want the Lightin' Committee to go on that track; an' the Sanitary Committee on another track; an' he won't talk—he'll switch the lot of thim where he wants thim. He'll be mayor—that's what he'll be; but, man alive, won't it be fun whin, mebbe, the judge that thried him for stickin' up a coach'll visit the place, an' the governor that signed his pardon'll be here to pay us a visit! Who'll be receivin' thim—who'll be receivin' thim? Why, the new school-trustee, the man that's goin' to be mayor—Bill Minden, who's stuck up as manny trains an' coaches as he's got fingers an' toes; Bill Minden, that's got monney in more

banks than wan, and God help thim if they don't take care of his monney!"

The Young Doctor smiled and patted Kernaghan's shoulder. "You're a wonderful little fellow, Kernaghan. You've got a long eye; you see far ahead; and Minden wouldn't make a bad mayor either. I think he'll make a good school-trustee, too; but have you forgotten they're going to elect a bishop when the Diocesan Synod of the English Church meets here next month? Come now, Patsy, why shouldn't he stand for bishop?"

Patsy scratched his head again. "Aw, well, for a Protis'ant bishop that'd be all right. It doesn't require anny larnin' to be a Protis'ant bishop. There's no layin' on of hands for wan av thim. They just talk av the grace of hivin an' the outpourin' of the spirit. Then the women weep and the men cough in their hands when they're lectured—an' why not Bill Minden? I'd as leave see him a bishop as a mayor."

The Young Doctor's eyes twinkled. "Well, so would I, Kernaghan. I wouldn't draw much distinction. I'd trust Minden just as much in one office as the other."

"Well, y'r anner, that's not saying how much ye trust him, is it?"

The Young Doctor's lips gave a quirk. "Do you hear anything against him, Patsy—anything you can lay your hands on since he came to Askatoon?"

"That's it, that's it," answered the little man from Cork; "there's nawthin' that annybody can lay hands on. Wipin' out his past, what he's doin' now needs no pinince; but leadin' the life that he's leadin' now, isn't it a burnin' shame they won't take him as he is—I mean the Methodies, the Protis'ants, and the newcomers! They won't belave

in him till he's been saved at the 'marcy seat, as they call it."

The twinkle quickened in the Young Doctor's eyes. "Well, but won't there be a chance for that? Doesn't the big Methodist camp-meeting begin soon out at Mayo—Nolan Doyle's place? What are all the big tents for? Isn't the Rev. Ephraim Masterton, the great revivalist, coming to save our souls and put Father Roche's nose out of joint?"

Kernaghan sniffed. "Aw, yis, 'tis true, as you say. That holy show opens in a week, an' more shame to Nolan Doyle, a good Cat'lic, for lettin' his place be used for the intertainment. D'ye think Bill Minden, that holds a place of his own in the ecclesiastical wurruld—d'ye think that that solitary figure of his own persuasion'd give the holy Cat'lic Church the pass-by if he was goin' annywhere into another denomination? Do ye think he'd bellow out his pinitince at what they call a 'prothracted meetin'?' Aw no, Doctor dear. We'll just go back to the idee I started with, and it's this: Bill Minden'll be elected school-trustee, an' whin that's done he'll be elected mayor, and whin that's done——"

"Whin the *town's* done-brown, good-bye to William Ecclesiasticus Minden," remarked the Young Doctor provokingly.

Kernaghan protested with hands and head. "D'ye think Minden'll go back to the ould ways of him—to the train robbin' and stickin' up the coach? D'ye think he hasn't enough money to live on without that? I've h'ard he has a hundred thousand dollars in the bank. That's a lot o' money. Can't a man stay honest on a hundred thousand dollars?"

At that moment several wagons went trailing past,

carrying great piles of tent cloth, stakes and ropes. Kernaghan stared at them with swiftly rising color. In religion he was a fanatic, and would have gone to the stake to defend the doctrine of transubstantiation or papal infallibility.

"Look at it—look at it!" he snarled, "makin' a circus of the Christian religion, doin' the heavenly acrobatic!"

His color deepened, his fingers opened and shut convulsively. "Is there no shame to thim, with their performin' tricks like monkeys on a pole to ixcite the crowds till they're crazy as loons an' think they've 'got religion'? They'll be preachin' about the burnin' fiery furnace an' the perpetual wurm, but plaze God send a little prairie fire to burn up their tints and wipe out the shame of it!"

"Come, come, Patsy," admonished the Young Doctor, "that won't do. 'Live and let live,' you know. Minden reads his Bible *in coram publico,* and you wouldn't think less of him if he praised the Lord in a tent."

"Aw, I'll tell ye what," answered Kernaghan, with the spasm of passion passing, but a sullen look remaining in his eyes, "when I see Bill Minden doin' that, I'll go into the desert like John the Baptis' an' think a bit, an' a bit more afther that—aw, look, Doctor dear, there's Bill Minden now on his way to the school—to the Central School! It's a Friday afternoon, an' he'll be lettin' himself go to the boys an' gurls."

The Young Doctor looked quizzically at Kernaghan. "And showing off before Miss Finley, eh?" he remarked.

"Aw, that! That's no showin' aff about it. Shure he drops his eyes whin he looks at her, like a bit of a boy tin years old."

The other broke into a happy laugh. "Oh, Patsy, Patsy Kernaghan, what Irish bulls you make and what an

Irish calf you are—' He drops his eyes when he looks at her!' "

The Young Doctor nevertheless began to wonder why Bill Minden "dropped his eyes."

He also began to think of what he himself said on the very first day of Bill Minden's arrival in Askatoon, when the crowd gossiped about the notorious one in front of Rigby's drug store. He had said to Father Roche then: "If we only knew exactly why a man did some certain thing in his life, perhaps some very small thing, we should know his whole character. Now perhaps if we knew exactly why Bill Minden went to that school this afternoon we should have a Book of Revelations."

He was a man of insight and understanding, and he had never ceased to wonder why Minden interested himself so in the Central School, or why he had come to Askatoon. Somehow the two things seemed one in his mind, as though each depended on the other. That Minden should show such interest in the town itself, and that he should become school-trustee, seemed one piece in which Cora Finley was part of the mosaic. He was sure there was an association with a mystery in the background. Bill Minden, the ex-criminal, the notorious highwayman, turned peaceful, pious citizen, dropping his eyes when he looked at a girl, could only be explained by a law at work and not as one of life's vagaries.

The Young Doctor had seen and heard nothing which gave him a clue, and the fact that Mrs. Finley was the most implacable of Bill Minden's critics added another twist to the knot. If, however, he could have witnessed a scene in Mrs. Finley's house that night about nine o'clock he would have found a reason for everything that puzzled him.

Mrs. Finley was sitting alone in her little parlor, looking out of the window into the increasing darkness, through which faint stars twinkled, when she was startled by a heavy footfall on the gravel path outside. Rising, she stood for a moment hesitating what to do, for the footstep had an ominous sound, she knew not why. She was not possessed by fear, though she was alone, Cora having gone to choir-practice. She had the sense of safety of the elect who believe in the foreordained. It was the particular nature of the footstep that startled her; for somehow it recalled a night twenty-two years before, when her life took a turn in a new direction and had so continued. Now her brain cleared, and she hastened into the hallway as the heavy footstep stopped, and a hand knocked on the lintel of the open door.

"Come in," she said. "What do you want?" she added quickly in slight agitation.

"It's Bill Minden," was the reply.

"What do you want?" she persisted, her voice a little querulous now.

"A word with you—just a word or two," was the answer.

"There were to be no more words forever," she rejoined.

"It's twenty-two years, and I want you to let me break my promise. We're getting old and you never can tell what'll happen," Minden urged.

She gave a great sigh. "Then wait till I pull down the blinds and light up," was her response.

"No, don't light up," he pleaded, stepping inside the hallway. "I haven't come here to do any harm, as you know. It's quieter in the dusk; the mind keeps steady-like when there's no light. It's like a blanket. Blind

people are always quiet, an' I've had to keep my eyes so wide open, and I've been going so hard for so long, that I can stand more dark than light. Eighteen hours' dark in a day wouldn't be too much for me now."

"You talk like a poetry-book," Mrs. Finley replied, with hardness in her tone. "Seems like Askatoon makes you a bit childish."

An almost animal-like grunt came from Bill Minden's lips. It had protest, agreement, anger, and friendliness all in one; but he did not retort in words.

"I'm going to light up," she repeated, and went quickly into the room from which she had come.

From the hallway Minden heard the blinds pulled down, and presently a lighted lamp was placed on the round centre-table, which held a Bible and a photograph-album.

"She'll scratch—maybe bite," he said to himself, "but she's all right. She only wants handlin'. I've got to get what I come for."

Presently the set, assertive figure of the woman made its appearance again. "You can come in now," she said with no kindness in her voice.

Determined goodness was written in her face. Her forehead was a little too high for generosity, a little too narrow for benevolence, yet from the somewhat peaked crown to the watchful brown eyes there were veneration and will quietly enthroned. Precision, routine, sober neatness marked everything she was and everything she did. Her hair, carefully crimped and partially covering her ears, showed some acute strain of vanity still actively alive. The big cameo brooch at her throat suggested an acquired social position which lay between, say, the seamstress and the druggist, or perhaps the girl-clerk and

the big store-keeper. She was dressed as though "prepared for company," as the Askatoon people called it; yet it was only part of her regular life and custom. She was always "prepared for company." She washed dishes with a cloth tied to the end of a stick, she made fires with gloves on. She was the very pattern of precision.

There was something forbidding about her, and yet something also which made Minden's eyes light up with satisfaction. He had seen her several times since he came to Askatoon, but nearly always at a distance. Once or twice he had passed her in the street, but she had given him no chance of addressing her. Once he went to the Methodist Meeting House on the chance of seeing her. She had, however, only come for the prayer-meeting, not for the regular service beforehand; and as it was not for him to stay to the prayer-meeting, he had had only a glimpse of her as she went softly yet austerely to her pew, the position of which accurately defined her social status in Askatoon.

Bill had never till now got her absolutely into his eye since his arrival in Askatoon. A wonderful shining look of approval came into his face, as he took her all in with the trained eye of one who had so much lived by its training, by the deftness of the hand and the courage of the mind.

"What do you want?" she asked, looking at him steadfastly now.

He shrugged his huge shoulders good-humoredly. "You know, when you say that in the light like this it sounds sharper than when you said it in the dark. Couldn't you turn down the lamp a bit? I'd like to hear you talk," he added. "I haven't heard your voice for twenty-two years. I don't think it's changed any; but if you

wasn't so religious and so particular, I'd say you'd more bones in your stays than you used to—a bit stiff, missus, a bit stiff to an old friend."

A slight flush passed over her face. She resented the reference to her stays, but she waved her hand vaguely into the space around her, as it were, and said: "Where be you goin' to sit?".

He looked at the horse-hair sofa which had as little attraction for him as it had for the pretty school teacher, Cora, whose clothes and the wearing of whose clothes suggested taste; and he shook his head.

"I'd like the rocker, if I could take the lace curtain off it," he said, pointing to the crochet work antimacassar covering the back of the rocking-chair.

"Oh, it washes," she answered dryly, "and I see you don't oil your hair! Leave it be."

He beamed over her, grinned broadly, and lowered himself comfortably into the capacious rocker. "Say, you've kep' your word, 'Liza Finley," he said presently. "My gracious goodness, yes, you've kep' your word. You earned them three thousand dollars—you earned them; and three times three thousand dollars you earned. My, what you've gone and done and been to that gal—to that blessed babe I put into your arms twenty-two years ago!"

"It wasn't hard to do my duty by her. If you have a daughter you do your duty by her," said the other, with a face that relaxed somewhat, but with underlying antagonism in her tone.

The good-natured smile died away from Minden's lips. "You needn't rub it in," he said huskily. "'Course she's your daughter. I give her to you twenty-two years ago, because I was a law-breaker, an' her mother was dead, an'

I knew I never could run straight, an' I couldn't bring her up proper. I give her to you because I couldn't bear that when she grew up she'd know her father was what he was going to be—a jail bird. I knew I'd be a jail bird. I knew it had to come, an' it did. So I give her to you an' your Steve with the last dollars I had—three thousand, it was—for you to love her an' bring her up to be yours evermore. An' you done it because you had no child of your own, an' you wanted one an' Steve wanted one, an' you couldn't give him one. It looked as if my wife died just to give you hers. Mebbe that's how it was, for though she had a wide mind she couldn't have lived with me without having her pride hurt. An' I've kep' away from you, an' I've kep' my word for twenty-two years—now, haven't I? An' ain't she a flower of the prairie? Ain't she worth all you've done for her, 'Liza Finley? You look like a graven image, but you've got the heart the mother of Moses didn't have; you've got the heart of Pharaoh's daughter."

She made a sharp effort to stand him off. "You had no business to come; you've broke your word; you've got no rights here. Cora believes she's my child, and mebbe I love her better than any child I might have had, just because she had no mother of her own, and my duty said I must be more partic'ler for her because she was a trust. When she come back from school and told about a strange man speaking to her the first day you come to Askatoon, I knew it was you. You can make up your mind"—again her lips became set, her face hardened, her figure stiffened —"you can make up your mind you're not going to have her."

Minden half rose from his seat, but fell back with a helpless gesture. "What are you talkin' about?" he pro-

tested. "Do you think I don't know what's good for her? I've been in jail three times since I handed her over to you. You've brought her up like a lady—like a lady; you've give her a good schoolin', you've made her the choice and special fruit of this here garden. D'you think I'm not proud of it, an' of her an' of what you've done? D'you think I don't sit right down and say, 'Bill Minden, you done the right thing when, bein' sure you was goin' to the devil, you put your little gal on the heavenly path?"

"What have you come here for, then?" persisted the apprehensive woman, not yielding her rigidity.

He waved an ingratiating hand to her. "Haven't I told you? Just to look at her an' be near her; just to see what Bill Minden himself might ha' been if he'd took it in his head to go right at the start. 'Liza Finley, I've got a good heart an' I've got a good head, an' my feelings belong to the holy way, but my tastes and habits get loose *en route,* an'——"

"On the broad path that leadeth to destruction," she interjected.

He would not be provoked. "I tell you, 'Liza Finley, I understand every holy feeling you've got an' that my girl's got."

Again she protested. "Not your girl, but my girl, that for twenty-two years I've cared for, from the day I unpinned her and put her in her cot till now when I tuck her in at night, and she says, 'Bless you, mammy!'"

Minden's eyes blinked. As he himself said, he had a good heart. "I know all that," he remarked. "You don't need to say it. But I'm getting old and lonely an' sick of the broad, stony highway. I want peace. I've got enough money to keep me till the end of the trail, an'——"

"But how did you get the money?" she interjected scornfully. "How did you come by it? Do you think an honest girl or any honest man or woman would share your stealings?"

"Don't be so hard," Bill replied soothingly. "You don't know how I got it; an' anyway, your own Methodist church took two hundred dollars of it the other day for the new organ, an' the Baptists an' the Presbyterians an' the Holy Romans have took what I give them, to say nothin' of the hospitals an' the charity plants. They all grab it, however I got it; an' anyway, ain't it right they should? If it was got dishonest, why not give it to honest people, to the good people, to the prayer people? See here, 'Liza Finley, what I've got I've got, an' it can't be give back. What's the good of tryin' to give back a lot of money to a lot of people that robbed a lot of other people, that stole from their bosom friends, that burgled their grandmothers? Don't you see you can't trace back the origin of what I've got?"

Mrs. Finley shook her head in repudiation. "Suppose they all were thieves way back to Adam, that's no excuse why you should be a thief in the sight o' the Lord."

Minden scratched his head, smacked his lips, then grinned broadly. "Say, you've got me—got me like a piece of toast on a fork, but don't you see that's a bill I've got to settle myself, and don't you see that's a bill that I'm settlin' myself? Because of what I done it ain't for me to have the one thing that's worth living for, the one thing that I've got pride in, the one thing that'd make my old age peaceable, if not pious—my little darlin' gal. That's what I pay, Missus, and by gosh—I beg your pardon, I ain't goin' to swear—that's what I pay, an' have got to keep on payin'."

"If you was only a good man," she remarked, her features relaxing now; "if you only had religion, if you'd only found grace and the Spirit had entered into you, why, then——"

But now he interrupted with a swift wave of his capacious hand. "No, no, no! What you say now makes me see I care for her ten times as much as you do. D'you think that if I riz' up from the anxious-seat to-morrow, an' said, 'I've found it, I've found it, I've got religion, I'm saved!'—do you think that'd make any difference? No, no, not any. My gal, my little gal, gosh Almighty!—I beg your pardon, twict—no, she ain't never to know that Bill Minden, that's done time, that Bill Minden, who's plenty notorious, is her father. She's got to think always that Steve and 'Liza Finley was her father and her mother; she's got to have a clean family history. She's too good to be tarred by me. I know my place. I tell you I know my place, an' I'm up agin' the everlastin' fact that I got to die without her saying to me onct, even onct, 'Father!' Don't you be so hard. You're good, but don't you be so shy about givin' the glad hand to them that can't never say, 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.' I b'long to them that'll have to go on wantin' and not gettin'."

Now there was a faint tremor of the woman's lips. She was suddenly lost in the atmosphere of a bigger world than she had ever known. "If you don't want to take her away, what is it you do want?" she asked helplessly.

He leaned forward towards her eagerly. "I'd like to be able to come here sometimes, to make friends with you and her—not bosom friends, not like peas in the same social pod, but as a bad man with a good heart that you was bein' kind to. That would be enough for me—just to

be near her, to watch her, to see her look this way and that, an' speak this how an' that how, an' doin' the little things that show a woman off. That's why I'm goin' to be school-trustee, that's why I'm goin' to be mayor, if I can, just to make me look a bit all right in her eyes. 'Liza Finley, I've talked to you more to-night than I've ever talked for thirty years, an' I've let myself go, because I couldn't hold in any longer. Now what are you going to do about it all?"

He looked round the room with almost hungry eyes. "I ain't had a home for twenty-two years," he went on. "I've lived inside any old house an' in any old room without reg'lar standin' anywhere; just payin', payin', payin' for anythin' I ever got; payin' for kindness just as I paid for a corn-husk bed, or milk, or old rye, or a week's washin'. I'd like a home same as this—well, maybe not the same as this every way, for I don't need carpets and antimacassars; but still just a pleasant place same's this, where I'd sit down and spread out my feet an' look round an' say, 'Now, gals, anything you want to make this home happy is yours.'"

Mrs. Finley rose to her feet in an agitation she could not conceal. "I've got to think it over," she said, "and I can't think right with you sitting there talking. The way you talk you could almost make the mountains get up and walk; but I got to do my duty. I'm a Christian, I'm a class-leader, I've got religion, and I don't want any traffic in unrighteousness."

"The world wouldn't be saved if the good people didn't look after the bad," remarked Minden shrewdly.

The woman picked at her skirt nervously—it was strange how this man moved her. "Cora'll be back in a

minute," she said anxiously. "It's almost her time, and I don't want you here when she comes."

Minden nodded, and rose up slowly from the rocking-chair, the antimacassar clinging to his shoulders. Mrs. Finley stepped quickly to him and relieved him of the ludicrous burden. As she did so, Bill caught her hand and spoke quickly:

"You saw your duty clear when you took my gal from me an' made your bond, which you've kept like a Christian of the caticombs. Well, you'll see your duty again just as I saw it for you twenty-two years ago. You know that dandy hymn, 'For I can read my title clear to mansions in the skies'? Well, you've got a clear title for that sky-gal that once was mine. She's yours forever; she loves you; an' all I want is a little reservation on the prairie-land your title covers. You can dole out the rations—an' don't be stingy, 'Liza Finley."

"I have got to pray over it—that's a fact," she answered. "I've got to take it to the throne of grace."

Bill shrugged his shoulders. "Well, in these days the throne stoops kindly to democracy, an' I'll take my chance," he said as he put on his hat.

It sounded as though he were making light of sacred things, but Mrs. Finley did not misunderstand; it was only "the manner o' speakin'" of the country.

"You must go," she urged. "Cora'll be here any minute now; but I'll let you know, I'll truly let you know what the Lord tells me to do."

Three minutes later, on opposite sides of the street, Bill Minden and his daughter passed each other; but, unlike ships that pass in the night, they did not speak to each other in passing. It was too dark for Cora to see who it was, though her father knew, and he listened to her footsteps till he could hear them no longer.

CHAPTER III

THE CAMP MEETING

Revival meetings are generally held in great halls or churches, but the strikingly successful revival meeting at Mayo, Nolan Doyle's ranch, was held in tents, and it was therefore called a camp meeting. It was the first that had ever been held between Winnipeg and the Rockies. Therefore, the population of Askatoon was numerously reinforced by the religious pilgrim from outside, and also by the inquisitive sinner who came to see, be seen, and enjoy whatever sensation the pious exercises might beget. To these was added the visitor and citizen, who was neither religious nor simple, but who had pursued his way without being convicted of unrighteousness on the one hand or being reputed irreligious on the other. His particular conversion, when it came, was no sensation; he was simply convicted of original sin and the need for finding salvation. His consequent pain, agony, and spiritual disturbance were indispensable to a proper passage from the ranks of the unsaved to the saved. He received the sympathy of those who went about embracing, exhorting, and whispering comfort; but his capture caused less rejoicing than when some real outcast, some acknowledged sinner, reprobate, drunkard, evil-liver, or scoffer, bent to the spiritual storm and strove with the spirit, until at last, tossing upon the sea of emotion, he felt his fingers grip the bulwark of the ship of salvation. Then, lifted on a wave of passion to its safe deck, he cried out, "I'm saved! Saved! Bless the Lord!" while all around him rose the cry of "Glory! Glory!" with all the emotional ejacula-

tions which signified that a soul was snatched from the burning.

The great revivalist preacher, Ephraim Masterton, was a reaper without a rival so far as the West had known. In the great tent he alternately prayed and exhorted, blessed and wept, soothed and clamored, and exultingly embraced the conquered ones, translated from the anxious-seat to the platform of the saved with its spectacular joy.

Never was there a greater emotional intoxication, never a greater "outpouring of the spirit." It was just after the harvest, the weather was still delightfully, indeed amorously, warm, and in the lull that followed the strenuous activities of the wheat harvest—or the almost complete harvest—the fervid air of exalted sentiment was highly stimulating. It was perhaps unfortunate that, while the tents were pitched in the open, there was very near by a grove of trees offering invitations to the pleasures of indolence. The cynic might well be scornful of the too neighborly association of the Godly love in the tents in the open and the profane love in the grove that shadowed them.

The Young Doctor scratched his chin in reflection when Terence Brennan, the millionaire railway-owner and rancher, fresh from a hasty visit to the camp meeting made out of curiosity while paying a visit to Mrs. Nolan Doyle, his sister, said to him: "Did you ever read Bobby Burns's 'Holy Fair'"? And when the Young Doctor nodded in reply, added cynically: "'And mony a job begun that day will end in hockmagandy,' or some ither place."

The Young Doctor's reply was a little severe. After all, Terence Brennan was an absentee millionaire who

could afford any pleasure he wanted, and, therefore, could more easily escape the divine discontent possessing those whose field of life is limited, whose pleasures mental and emotions spiritual are few.

"It's no bad thing to get back into the primitive life and to the primary emotions," he said. "You are too incredulous, Brennan. 'Evil to him that evil thinks.' Also you are a Catholic, and prejudiced. I'm for letting aspiring human nature aspire; I'm for letting humanity cry out to something outside itself, to think of something outside itself, to reach a bit higher than it is. Catholics and Protestants, Mohammedans and Hindus, and all the rest, do it in different ways. One tribe does it this way, another tribe does it that way, and you can't help it if now and again there's a bad egg in a basket. You're doing very well out of Askatoon, Brennan. It contributed its share of your railway profits, and you'd better let us work out our own salvation. In fear and trembling of course it will be—fear that you'll raise your freight rates on us; but for heaven's sake let us live our own life. You selfish millionaires are critical because your souls are so small."

Brennan laughed good-naturedly. He loved attack; it was the breath of life to him.

"There, there; I'll give you the chips for the game," he replied. "You can say you've won; but you're right; I'm in a mood to be critical of Askatoon, so I suppose I'm not a really good judge of your holy fair."

"Wherefore critical?" asked the Young Doctor, his mind, as always, alert for every shiver of color in the kaleidoscope of life.

Brennan chuckled and lit a cigar. "Well, Bill Minden in Askatoon—Bill Minden as school-trustee, Bill Minden standing for mayor, Bill Minden as the fatherly philan-

thropist, patting the school children on the head, chucking the young lady teacher under the chin, magnetizing the town and corporation with a wave of his bonnie brown hand—well, isn't that enough to make a railway president critical of Askatoon? Once to my knowledge, and twice to my instinct, Bill Minden has gone through the pockets of the passengers of my trains, and has scooped the gold dollars from the express car, and here he is now the pet lamb of the fold!"

"Is that why you are here?" asked the Young Doctor.

"You ought to know better. Isn't my family here—Norah Doyle out at Mayo and my father and mother? I didn't know that Minden was in Askatoon till I saw him at the camp meeting this afternoon; till I saw him getting inside the big tent with a look on his face like the Queen of Sheba when she met Solomon. It beats me. What's he here for? What's his game?"

"Well, some men, when they've tired of doing the world, seek the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," answered the Young Doctor. "When you're tired of *doing* the world, Brennan, when you've finished 'watering stock' in the cities, perhaps you'll come too and water the onions in your own back garden here—like a king who, having had everything the world can offer, in the spirit of the sybarite turns hermit, and tries the simple life from the sheer luxury of living."

"Perhaps you're right," answered the millionaire. "The gay Griselda, finding the candle of enjoyment all burnt up and only the black snuff left, comes and lights the wick again at the altar of the church, and ends her days in peace, properly penitent, pleasantly pious, prudently prepared."

The Young Doctor roared with laughter. "Brennan,

you've been listening to Bill Minden. That's his game, and you've caught on. Alliteration is a disease with him. A choicer vocabulary I've never known."

"Suppose the camp meeting catches him—converts him, eh?"

"Well, that would please Mrs. Finley," remarked the Young Doctor with a meaning smile.

"Mrs. Finley? Oh, old Steve Finley's widow, eh? Is she making up to Bill?"

"No, but she seems to have a fancy for saving his soul, and she has offered up petitions in the prayer-meeting pretty constantly of late that Bill shall be snatched from the burning."

The two men had walked along the street until they had almost reached the door of the post-office. At that moment Cora Finley stepped out of the post-office door, and with eyes alight and excitement in her face came quickly towards the Young Doctor, nodding to Terence Brennan at the same time.

"Oh, what do you suppose has happened?" she said. "Mr. Masterton has had a stroke, or something, at the camp meeting, and they're bringing him in to Askatoon."

Terence Brennan looked at the girl inquiringly, then said: "I've only just come from there. I didn't hear of it."

"That's easily explained," she answered. "There was no school to-day, the telegraph operator wanted to go to the camp meeting, and I've taken her place at the key. You know, I learned telegraphy a long time ago," she added to the Young Doctor. "There's a branch line to Mayo, where the camp meeting is, and I've just got the news over the wire. They're bringing him in."

"So endeth the spiritual free-and-easy," remarked Brennan, with an ironical smile.

The girl's eyes flashed. "You wouldn't understand," she said; "you're a Roman Catholic."

"No, I suppose I wouldn't understand," the young millionaire drawled pleasantly. "It wants a sensitive mind like Bill Minden's to grasp such things."

The girl's eyes flashed indignation. "Some men sin and pay, like Mr. Minden," she said, "and others sin and don't pay."

"Why should they if they don't have to?" cheerfully retorted the millionaire.

"Those that sin and are sorry, and suffer and pay now, don't have to pay in the end," she replied severely.

"Well, I'll put it off as long as possible," remarked Brennan—"'Jordan is a hard road to travel.'"

The Young Doctor's eyes had been searching the girl's face with a curious, almost set intentness. Something in her dark blue eyes riveted his attention.

"I see it," he said to himself suddenly, and with a thumping of his heart, "By George, I see it!"

A moment afterwards the three had separated, the girl to go back to the post-office, the millionaire to mount his horse and gallop away to the pleasant little home where his old father and mother peacefully lived in the plenty he provided.

The Young Doctor went to his office. If Masterton, the revivalist, had had a stroke, they would be sure to send for him, or to bring the sick man to him; and he must be ready for the emergency. As he entered his house he looked back towards the post-office.

"I see it!" he said aloud. "I see it now. She's got Bill Minden's eyes. I've found the clue."

All night the Young Doctor watched at Masterton's bedside, and by the middle of the following day was able to announce that his patient was out of danger; but that he must take a long rest to recover from the partial paralysis which had seized him.

The religious dovecotes of Askatoon were greatly fluttered in consequence. None there was—no minister or layman—who could replace the hypnotic revivalist who had overcharged his battery. There was no minister within range, there was no layman within knowledge, who, in the words of Jonas Billings, could "at full steam ahead and under high pressure" transport sinners from the anxious-seat to the platform of the elect.

All day the class-leaders, figuratively speaking, wrung their hands; all day the idlers idled, and the sensationalists grumbled in an atmosphere which climatically was very warm, and out of which somehow the sting of adventure—spiritual adventure—had passed. They were paying for excitement, and it had suddenly evaporated.

The class meeting arranged for the morning was as barren of emotional music as a tin pan is of melody. Dejection, irritation, prevailed. Those who were responsible for the organization of the great gathering talked mournfully of the spiritual loss.

But there was another loss upon which they were all discreetly silent, until Rigby, the druggist, who was an especially candid soul, remarked that three days more and they would have had enough cash profit out of the camp meeting to pay the debt off the church. There was the real sad and sorrowful part of the business. The Lord's work would be hindered because the Lord's people were in debt, but Brother Rigby, chemist and druggist, did not

put the matter with that chastity of language which enables the truth to be told without indelicacy.

"We expected to net three thousand dollars," he said, "and we've got two thousand five hundred of it, but the chances of getting the last five hundred ain't worth a pinch of soda."

Here a voice intervened. "Have faith, Brother Rigby, have faith!" it cried. "Baking soda makes the dough rise; from faith will rise our deliverer. Perhaps even while we are troubled here, one cometh of whom it may be said, 'Who is this that cometh with dyed garments from Bozrah traveling in the greatness of his strength'?"

Murmurs of approval ran round the room. The adroit local minister had blanketed the sordidness of the druggist's candor.

Curiosity would bring a crowd to the late afternoon meeting, and interest for one day would be tolerably secure, but it would quickly and finally evaporate unless someone could be found who would raise the standard with a new religious slogan.

The weather was propitious, the late afternoon was very warm, and the comfort of physical warmth is a great encouragement and support to an organized meeting.

One local minister opened the proceedings very wisely with a hymn, and it was a good hymn. It was the hymn which Bill Minden had quoted to Mrs. Finley—"When I can Read my Title Clear to Mansions in the Skies." It started well, but it finished on a wave of feeling with a little lower crest than that of previous days. Another minister from the mountains was about to pray, when a throbbing voice rang out from the crowd singing, "Hold the fort, for I am coming," and the congregation,

responding to the inspiration, joined in with great fervor, to the delight of the leaders.

Prayer by the mountain-preacher followed, but it lacked what one of the critics at the back of the tent called "snap"; and he further remarked that it reached the audience it was intended to reach, but he'd take a bet it didn't reach the Lord.

Another hymn was started by the undertaker of the town, probably the ugliest, dreariest, and most unpopular man in the place. "I am so Glad that Jesus Loves Me," he sang. If he had sung it alone the audience would have felt that he ought to be unutterably grateful, because the last thing he was likely to inspire on earth or in heaven was love. The leaders, however, quickly obscured his unpopularity by an outburst of ecstasy.

It was apparent that the soul of the meeting required flagellation. The leaders soon found themselves in heavy country, and were conscious of dying fires. As soon as the hymns had finished they brought their biggest gun into action. It was the president of a theological college, with a clean-shaven actor's face and long white hair combed straight back from a narrow but somewhat lofty forehead.

There were times when his unctuous intonations and saponaceous appeals, behind which was a really godly nature, had effect; and now just at the start his oratory stirred the congregation, but evaporation almost immediately began.

Something with more grip, something more rugged and less refined and usual was required. The Rev. Ephraim Masterton had not been rugged, his had not been the voice of the vernacular, but he had been young, eloquent, sentimental, vivid, and hypnotic, and having caught the women first by his sad beauty and his ecstasy, he had got

the men by a really magnetic force. The white-haired imitator, with his stereotyped adjurations, without a note of originality, was but an imitation of the true emotional power which the stricken revivalist had pushed too far.

The congregation was slipping away swiftly out of control, in spite of the speaker's energetic outbursts here and there, of pleadings to sinners, when suddenly, in a short pause of the harangue—indeed, in its most desperate moment—a beautiful, clear, full-throated voice rang out above the subdued clamor of those who had found, and those who were finding, peace. It sang:

"There's a land that is fairer than day,
And by faith we can see it afar,
And our Saviour waits over the way
To prepare us a dwelling place there."

It was the voice of the leader of the choir, Cora Finley, Something in it vibrated like the strings of a violin. It had neither cant, sentimentality, nor whining. It rang true metal. It was the convinced outpouring of a simple soul that knew no guile, which belonged to all that was, had ever been, or ever had been taught. It was the first note that she had sung at this revival meeting; it was the first time that she had ever taken part as one who had joined the church.

The great congregation let her sing the whole verse without joining in, while tears filled Mrs. Finley's eyes and trickled down her cheeks, for it seemed to her that the prayers of years had been answered, that her girl "had got religion."

The meeting was magnetized once again, and the second verse began in a very storm of exhortation. The preachers had failed and the previous hymns had failed; they had seemed forced and unreal, but now the real thing possessed the meeting.

What was to come after none could tell, but for the moment all was well. To-day was as yesterday, the darkness was lit up. Veins tingled, hearts swelled, tears flowed, voices rang out.

In the middle of the third verse there was a sudden movement which attracted attention, and a man's voice calling. Then, all at once, before the congregation could realize what was happening, there sprang on to the platform a man with a great touzled head, bushy beard, and blazing blue eyes.

"Saved!" he cried. "Saved! Glory be to God! There's a land that is fairer than day! I'm going—I'm going—I'm going there! Glory be——!"

It was Bill Minden. The class-leaders on the platform moved down on him, embracing him, shrieking in a frenzy of joy. The congregation rocked to and fro. Bill Minden the train-robber, the jail bird, the notorious, the school-trustee, the philanthropist, the would-be mayor, Bill Minden was converted. No longer the Bible read upon the hotel stoop, no longer the quaint commentary of the Old Testament to a curious crowd on a Sabbath morning, but now the sinner repentant, crying: "I've found it! I've found it! I've found it!" while shouting came from all sides, "Bless the Lord! Glory be, he's saved!"

Two minutes afterwards Minden was pouring out a flood of eloquence which even drowned the memory of Ephraim Masterton. Here was something right out of the core of nature. Here was a man of the people, in the language of the people, talking in a vernacular which roused them all to wonder and to holy passion.

Now all the past reading of Bill's Old Testament supplied him with texts, phrases, illustrations without number. This, united with the dialect or phrasing, with the

epithets, the quaint sayings, the vocabulary of the saloon, the race course, the mine, the railway, the mountain and the prairie, made his exhortation like none ever heard at any revival in all the world. He swept the crowd on one great wave of sensation into his net.

The camp meeting was saved by Bill Minden the converted, and for three days the great "effort" went on. At the end of it Mr. Rigby the druggist, treasurer of Grace Church, announced that the debt on the building was redeemed.

CHAPTER IV

MINDEN FORMS A PARTNERSHIP

THE newspapers of the West exclaimed sympathetically, and here and there cynically, on Bill Minden's "getting grace," as it was colloquially called. It certainly was a sensation; but the violence of the spiritual gymnastics was somewhat abated by the fact that Minden in all his public life, if it might be so called, had been the amazing anomaly of a man who had stuck up coaches and trains, and had even killed men, while carrying a Bible in his saddle-bag.

Paradox he had always been, and now, as a definite entity without contradiction, he was startling, but he did not defy understanding. It was as though a surgical operation had produced from a character composite of both crime and goodness a consistent whole.

The Young Doctor was profoundly interested in what he called the Case. No one in Askatoon but himself had seen the singular likeness between the deep blue eyes of Cora Finley and those of the notorious Minden. Once he got the clue he began to travel back, with scientific certainty, though a hundred incidents of Minden's life at Askatoon, and through many events surrounding his transfer from the highwayman's enterprise to his new civic virtue. At the end of the journey he found the truth—Minden was the girl's father. He could not, however, guess what had been the past relations between Mrs. Finley and Minden, and why it was that Mrs. Finley, until Minden's conversion, was his sharpest critic.

It was a fact, however, that when Minden stepped

from the platform of the saved in the hour of his conversion, Mrs. Finley had met him with outstretched hands. The Young Doctor himself had seen the conversion and had noted how it was linked with Cora's wonderful singing of "There's a Land that is Fairer than Day."

There, however, he stopped dead. He only knew that thereafter Minden frequented Mrs. Finley's home and even attended choir-practice now and then. It would all have been absurd, had it not been that Minden was one of the most natural men in speech and manner that could be found in a month of Sundays. Even as successful train-robber he had been unassuming. He had never swaggered in the hey-day of his triumphant crime, but had looked the world simply and humorously in the face. Now, as the most spectacular figure of the West, the black sheep of the flock turned miraculously white, and carried on the hands of all the good "prayer people," as he had called them, there was no smack of vanity or self-consciousness about him. As Jonas Billings said:

"He surely is a wonder. You'd think he was born at a love feast of the quarterly meeting, singing, 'I am so glad that my Saviour loves me.'"

But behind Minden's shrewd, kindly eyes, behind his loose-joined, friendly body, showing a healthy and generous existence, a brain was ceaselessly devising how to get that larger share of happiness which he could not wholly grasp. It was true he saw his daughter almost every day, though not every day did he speak with her; that he visited at Mrs. Finley's house; that he officiously inspected the school where she was; that he saw her at choir-practice.

But that was not enough. The great camp meeting had been dissolved into a shiver of prismatic radiance, but there was an obsession in his brain and heart which

controlled, possessed him; he wanted more. The acknowledgment of the girl as his daughter was denied him, but he had a supreme joy and vanity in what she was. Respectability such as hers was a very worshipful thing to him, although he had never known it until now. He longed, almost savagely, to be under the same roof with her, to feel her influence moving round him like a golden light every day.

Morning, noon, and night he thought and thought, and puzzled and puzzled his brain, as to what he could do to get closer to her and yet not risk the truth becoming known.

It was characteristic of him that he still stayed at the Sunbright Hotel. At first the preachers and the class-leaders reasoned, expostulated with him, but his reply had been, "I've lived in a tavern all my life, when I haven't been in a tent or a shack. I never had but for a little while any home 'cept a tavern since I was growed up. I'm a brother to every man, an' I'm most a brother to them that's on the pad, that's comin' an' goin'. I'm at home with the wayfarer, an' he's at home with me. Y've got to follow y'r bent in the state of life which the Lord has called you to. I want to be just *where* I've always been, while not being *as* I've always been. If I'm goin' to do any good with my religion, which I got while the lowly lamp still held out to 'luminate, I mustn't shake my shanks away from the passin' show. What's the good o' my living among believers? What I've got to do is to live among the damned. Being familiar with them, I get a better chance of gettin' my hand on to them, and coaxin' them out of the broad path into the neat and narrow way, where the light of love lingers long as life lasts."

In his "soul to soul" talks, as he called them, he never could resist this alliteration. His preachings, his prayers, and his exhortations were filled with masterly phrases; it was a unique gift.

"No, the tavern's the place for me, and a tavern it shall be," he added. "I'm of the passing world, prepared to penetrate the pilgrim's impenitent soul. To the tavern door comes the young yearlin' of the herd and the old buck of the bad lands. A word in season, a whisper in the night, a warning in the mornin', an' you never know but you've snatched a soul out of the cinders."

It was a good argument, still the prayer people felt it incongruous that their new leader, their profligate prodigal, now a tower of strength in the Lord's house, should still remain in the house of Rimmon, where scenes of drunkenness occurred; where even a migratory strumpet might now and again be seen.

What discontent might have developed till the fresh convert was disciplined at quarterly meeting would never be known, because on a certain inspired day Minden found the way out.

One night he had not slept at all thinking of his "little gal," and in the morning, soon after sunrise, sitting on the stoop of the hotel, he saw passing down the street another victim of insomnia—John Warner, the real-estate agent. Only the day before he had heard of Warner's impending bankruptcy. The poor man had built a hotel and could not pay for it, and the mortgagees and the banks were crowding to crush him, to get out of his mangled remains financial profit while yet it would not fail them.

As Minden watched Warner pass with haggard face and downcast look, there flashed into his mind the solu-

tion of his own problem. He rose hurriedly from the verandah and strode down the street after the broken man.

"Say, wait a minute, Mr. Warner," he said.

Apathetically, the other turned, but he did not speak.

"Tell me, what did your hotel cost you?" Minden asked. "What did it cost you, according to the bills and the auditors?"

"Seventeen thousand dollars—all I had, and six thousand more than I had," answered the other.

"I'll give eighteen thousand for it," said Minden, "if you can show me straight it cost you that."

"It's worth twenty-five thousand," responded Warner, with a new, tremulous look of hope in his face.

"Well, then, I'll give twenty thousand, if you're givin' it to me straight," returned Minden.

In vain the other tried to conquer himself, but he had eaten nothing for a couple of days, and he had not slept at all for three whole nights. He opened his lips once or twice to speak, then a great convulsion shook him, and he burst into tears. Sobs shook him as Minden put an arm round his shoulders and hurried him across the street into the Sunbright Hotel, and upstairs into his own room.

When Warner could control himself sufficiently he said: "My God, but you're a Christian, Mr. Minden!"

Why did Minden buy a hotel at a cost of twenty thousand dollars?

At first glance it seemed bad enough to live in a hotel when you were a professing Christian, but to buy a hotel deliberately, which would be licensed to sell "wine, beer,

and other spirituous and fermented liquors," seemed flying in the face of a newly got reputation for grace.

Bill saw the full significance of the situation he had created, but he had staked all on his inspired hazard, and he would see it through.

The news of his purchase travelled swiftly through the town, and many a sour-tempered sinner essayed to run across him during the day with the dark purpose of "showing him up," as they put it. For one of the Saved to buy a hotel was, as Jonas Billings said, enough to make a cat laugh. The unregenerate laughed consumedly, and Billings announced that Minden hadn't learned yet how to be a Christian. He guessed that as Bill had been taking things without paying for them all his life, the new habit of paying for what he wanted "sort of intoxicated him; an' he'll want to buy a race course next, an' a brass band to go with it."

Good humor marked the sardonic criticism of nearly every unregenerate, but Patsy Kernaghan, who had become Bill's most ferocious critic since his conversion, fairly danced in triumph to the Young Doctor's office, bursting in upon his medical friend as he was cleaning instruments after an operation.

On this unconventional entrance the Young Doctor thrust a long knife out at Patsy melodramatically.

"I'll cut your face away from that ugly nose of yours, Kernaghan," he said, "if you enter my office again without knocking."

"Aw, Doctor dear," rejoined the other excitedly—"aw, put it away. It doesn't matter cutting away me face—it's never been anny use to me; but have you h'ard what's happened? Did ye get the news? Did ye hear the thunderbolt drop?"

"You mean about Minden and Warner's hotel?" answered the other lazily.

"Tare an' 'ounds, isn't that a thunderbolt? Isn't that a fine scrape? In to-day an' out to-morrow, like a land leaguer an' Limerick jail! Here to-day and away to-morrow, like the clods of the valley! In the arms of the Methodies last week, and back again to Beelzeboob this week. Shure, I think he was mad—just struck down by a gurl's voice in a crowded tint, an' all the people shouting round him, 'Glory be!' He hadn't been used to it, and him gettin' old—that's what's the matter with him."

"Ah, you had hopes he would join the Catholics, Patsy," remarked the Young Doctor, with a careful edge to his voice.

"Shure, I thought there was that much sense left till him. There was hopes he'd get the balance of his mind in this good air, but, annyhow, glory be, he didn't stay long among thim Methodies. He breaks out like a young bull, an' buys a hotel, an' begorra, he's goin' to run it himself, too!"

"So there's hope of him yet, eh?"

"There's no hypokrasy in the Cat'lic Church. Shure, a man can keep a hotel, or be a doctor!—it doesn't matter how bad he is. The Church just says: Do your dooty where y'are placed; whether it's tradin' with good whisky or dosin' with bad poison. If 'tis so, Doctor dear, thin there y'are. The Church saves you in spite of it. That's not the way with the Methodies. Niver mind where y'are placed, come out of it, they say. Come out of it, an' be a baker, or a tinsmith, or a storekeeper, or an insurance agent, or an undertaker; an' there y'are! Thim's the heavenly trades that's pursooed in the mansions of the skies. Aw, Doctor dear, I was afeard Bill Minden was

losin' his mind; but I shouldn't wonder but some good angel with a bottle of Hinnisy's brandy stepped up till him last night, as he was getting into bed, an' whispered in his ear what was good for him. So he woke up in the marnin' with an empty bottle in his hand an' a new mind; an' seeing Warner's hotel yander, he observed his duty an' done it, an' was saved from the grave of the hypocrik an' the hell of the lunatic."

"Well, I'm not so sure of that," answered the Young Doctor. "I'd like to hear what Minden says to the class-leaders to-night. They're getting thumb-screws ready for him I hear. There were never any inquisitors in Spain like these, Patsy. The Spanish crowd said, 'Be of good cheer, for by this you shall be saved'; while the Askatoon inquisitors say, 'Put out his eyes, cut off his tongue, and let him be damned.' Kernaghan, my lad, I'm not at all sure there isn't a nigger in William Minden's fence. He'll roast them, I'm thinking."

The Young Doctor was quite right. There was to be a class-meeting in the evening, and at it the prayer people would sit in judgment on Minden, the converted one.

It was a difficult position. Minden had greatly increased the church membership; he had been an "instrument of grace," the rescuer of the lost. Also, he had been a rich source of financial profit, and their hearts were sick that this hotel business might force them to expel him from their communion.

In anyone else the matter would have called for reproach and discipline only, but in Minden's case it was a degrading return to the husks the swine did eat, and it was too notorious not to be taken notice of in a large way.

Minden knew it all. He depended on one thing, and he went to find it at the house of Mrs. Finley. It was five

o'clock in the afternoon, and, to his joy, Mrs. Finley was absent and Cora was at home. He entered on her at a moment when she was making for supper what are called "biscuits" in the West. In her white apron and flour-covered hands, with eyes alight and cheeks abloom, with an air of genteel business about her, she was a very picture of domesticity. Minden's heart grew big with pride.

"Peace be to this house," he said with Oriental quaintness and an Occidental smile.

"And unto you, friend, also," she replied, with joyous naturalness.

Presently she added, "I can't quite make out why it is, Mr. Minden, that the first time we met, your eyes seemed familiar to me, and just now when you came in it seemed as if I knew you ages ago somewhere."

A flush stole slowly over Minden's face. She had startled him. It was almost as though she had called him father.

"Well, it must ha' been all right between us ages ago," he answered, "for you surely are kind to me now. You don't stand me off as though I ought to be breakin' stones."

"You have been breaking stones," she answered. "You have broken the stone of many a hard heart; you've made people happy that were unhappy before. That's the thing about religion which I understand," she added. "I don't think I ever had any grace, as mother understands it; but helping someone that needs help is my religion."

"You don't just think all the time about saving your own soul, then?" asked the visitor.

"I think that's selfish," she answered. "You've got to be thinking of others or you don't have happiness."

Then, while wiping the flour from her fingers, she continued:

"That's why you bought John Warner's hotel, isn't it? You weren't thinking of yourself, but of him. Some of the class-leaders are mad at you, but you know why you did it, and you're going to explain to the meeting to-night, aren't you?"

For a moment Minden was silent, then, as though with an effort, he replied: "No, I guess I was selfish after all."

"I don't believe it," she replied stoutly.

He shook his head perplexedly. "I'll tell you why I bought that hotel, an' I'm tellin' you first of all. I'm hopin', too, you're not goin' to fly out an' say shame on me when I've told you. I bought that tavern, not to run it as a place where anybody can get drunk if he likes, or play cards, and shoot off his mouth. I bought it for the town's good. I'm goin' to run it as a temperance hotel. Lots of people know me in the West, an' lots who don't know me want to see me, as if I was a hyena in a circus; an' I'll draw. That tavern'll be a home for the weary, for the traveller comin' or goin'. I can do more good in a temperance hotel like that than ten churches can, for there'll be a word in season for them that never enter a church—not a word of religion, but just good tidin's, just a sort of sense of bein' all right."

She clapped her hands. "There, I was sure you meant something good by it, but I see now how a big mind thinks."

"Say, don't talk like that," Minden answered, with blinking eyes, while longing to kiss the spot on the top of her head where the light burnished her hair. "I'll tell you what my plans are, because you're the only person

can help me carry 'em out. If you say yes, then both of us together can make your mother say yes. . . .

"She can be made to say it," he continued, almost introspectively. "You don't know what I want? Well, listen. Your mother told me a week ago that this house has been sold by her landlord, an' she has to give up and get out. Well, I want her to come and help me make that temperance hotel go—the first ever started out here in a big way, an' I want you and her to come and live there. We can prove a hotel can be like a home; we can make it a real reef-me-in rest-house. Not a drop of liquor'll ever enter it, if I can help it; but I can't do it alone. There's not one in a million has got the sense of home your mother has. She can make that place seem a home. We can kill two or three of the small taverns, an' give the men that's running them work in our place; for half the men that run taverns are sober and hate drink; they see too much of it. Don't you take what I'm drivin' at? Will you do it?"

She certainly did not see all that he was driving at. What he wanted was this daughter of his and her reputed mother under his own roof, where he could see them every day, in the many hours of every day, and share with this wonderful girl the life of home. As he awaited her reply his eyes grew bigger with intense scrutiny and suspense.

Her eyes, like his, were expanding; she, too, saw a vision; it was the vision of a man's work and constructive power, brought within the range of her own co-operation.

"Splendid—it's splendid!" she exclaimed. "Of course I'll do it, if mother will; and she must. She certainly must do it. Isn't it a great, big, magnificent plan! That's religion," she continued. "It isn't getting at a lot of people at church on Sunday, and a few at class-meet-

ings in the week; but it's getting at people coming and going, and going and coming, and sitting and resting in a place where things are taught without words. Oh dear, I wish mother would come—but here she is!" she added, as the gate clicked.

A moment later Mrs. Finley was inside the room, quickly perceiving an air of excitement.

"What is it?" she asked, with a look of suspicion and reproof in her face, for she had heard of Minden's new adventure with alarm and pain.

"Now don't you offer to shake hands till I've told you everything," Minden said. "I've been tellin' *her* because instinct would tell her what to do, but it would be good, full-grown common sense with you. I was more afraid of her than you, because you'd make up your mind on the merits, and she'd make up hers on her feelin's."

Though Mrs. Finley was distressed and provoked at what she had heard about the tavern, there was a feeling for this man she could not conquer. He was a link with her old happy past. He had given her joy through this child of his. In spite of everything she believed in him.

"Well, I'd like a cup of tea first," she answered. "Maybe you'll get it, Cora, whilst we talk," she added to the girl.

Cora nodded, but before she left the room she said: "Please remember I beg you to do what he wants you to do."

When she returned ten minutes later, she saw what she had seen but few times in her life—tears in Mrs. Finley's eyes.

"We've got to do it, Cora; it's a clear message from on high," Mrs. Finley said.

Almost with an air of benevolence Cora watched the

two drink their tea. It seemed to herself that she was removed to a height above them both. In the man there was a great human passion working; in the woman's mind there was a conviction of a message from on high; in the girl's there was a romance of doing good, of helping her fellow-creatures, a view of something splendid, a sweet, indefinite promise of the future. It was something bigger than herself, and there was in it neither spiritual fanaticism nor human vanity—only the jealous wisdom and aspiration of youth.

CHAPTER V

SANCTUARY

So far Minden had had his way in everything in Askatoon. He had gone from sensation to sensation like the great adventurer he had always been. First the bogey man with a bad reputation, moving like a threatening cloud among them all; then the open-handed philanthropist, who never turned a marble heart to anyone in misery or any good cause; then school-trustee; later, the repentant sinner for whom there had been more joy than over the ninety-and-nine who needed no repentance; then at last, after his visit to Cora and Mrs. Finley, he was unanimously elected mayor; and after that came the greatest sensation of all: the transportation of Mrs. Finley and her daughter to the Rest Awhile Hotel.

There the capable, pious widow-woman with the cameo brooch and the medieval head became the organizer of a larger domestic scheme than she had ever known. Fifty-five years old as she was, the housekeeping of this large and various business did not prove too great for her capacity.

It had been a moment of great heart-searching on the part of the Methodist community when, in the sacred enclosure of the class-meeting, Minden unfolded his plan, and Mrs. Finley made a decisive little speech, in which she declared that she was called to do this thing; that the Spirit had spoken to her; and that as the work had to be done she was calmly sure that she could do it as well as, even a little better than, anybody else.

Two or three women present sniffed at this self-confidence, but on the whole she was taken at her own valua-

tion. That she, however, who had been the converted ex-criminal's most austere critic, should leave her little home and become the housekeeper of his big tavern was a large mouthful for these finicking folk to swallow. There were two or three women present who, if they had dared, would have said, "Why don't you marry him at once and have done with it!"

Good people as they were, it was natural they should be anxious that Mrs. Finley should not be a hypocrite, that the situation should be outwardly what it really was inwardly; for Mrs. Finley had no more idea of a closer association with Minden than he had, and it was as distant from his mind as Gehenna from Guadalupe. Minden was obsessed by one idea only—the home where his "little gal" would be.

It was not a home such as he would have liked; that is, a kind of stockade which should shut out the whole savage world. With the constant coming and going through its doorways of hundreds of travelers, the Rest Awhile Hotel was only a home like the Arab's tent or the gipsy's van; though there were two secluded sets of rooms at either end of the capacious hostel, where the peace of home had its habitat. Also there was a little dining room common to the three, where they met at least three times a day; and by Minden's careful ingenuity, there were many incidental meetings with the girl who was the apple of his eye.

Askatoon and the West watched the career of the Rest Awhile Hotel with abnormal scrutiny. Scores of wayfarers, attracted by the unique character of the place, hoped to find a bottle behind a door somewhere, or a secret panel which shielded some stimulant; but it was not long before the public became aware that the Rest

Awhile Hotel was in fact, as in name, a temperance hotel, where sarsaparilla, lemonade, ginger-beer, ginger-ale, and "Adam's ale" (pure cold water) were the only drinks to be had besides tea, coffee and cocoa.

No drunken man ever kept a foot within the "Rest Awhile," and at last it came to be understood that Minden's scheme was working well. Then the religious community began to imagine it was they who had devised this wonderful social reform, wherein the comforts of home were joined to the excitement of a pious summer picnic.

As mayor, Minden did his work well and wisely, and the business of the town was run economically. Only in the stationery department was there extravagance. His large way of doing things, his open-handedness were expressed in the handwriting which enabled him, by crowding, to put as many as fifty words on a sheet of foolscap, and if his fluency in writing had been like his spasmodic fluency in speech, the mayor's archives would have cost the town much money. As Patsy Kernaghan said to the Young Doctor:

"If he's goin' on being mayor we'll have to build a paper-mill, or he'll have to get a sicretairy."

"Well, there's Miss Finley," remarked the Young Doctor, with a queer look.

Kernaghan nodded and jerked an approving hand. "Aw, yis, longhand an' shorthand an' anny hand, she knows, that gurl. She just winds Bill Minden round her little finger. Shure, she's always bin the same since the furst day he come an' she smiled a soft word till him, walking out of the gate of the Central School. Don't you remember that, Doctor dear? Didn't I tell it till ye?"

"Yes," answered the Young Doctor, "I remember

it well enough. He's that fond of her she might be his own daughter."

"His own daughter! Do you mean that peach blossom from the wild tree in the garden of Eden—that peach blossom belong to the wicked old lupus tree with the Dead Sea fruit on it? Aw, Doctor dear, is there anny lunacy in y'r family?"

The Young Doctor had never whispered his suspicion to a human being. As the West says, he never *butted* in. It was the soul of his business, the etiquette of his life, that he should be *called* in. So, until the time came, until he should be called in, if that ever was to be, no one should guess what he thought Minden's story was, or what was the secret of the firm of Minden, Finley and Finley.

He was quite right. There was approaching the Rest Awhile Hotel an event, the one hand of which held happiness, while from the other streamed the black end of the midnight road.

Minden had treasured up all the late newspaper reports which told of his conversion, vividly set forth against his past umbrageous career. Some sneered at his getting religion: some hinted at the habit of the pig returning to its wallow, calling him a natural-born criminal. They said that he would yet return to the enticing dangers of crime, as a red man educated at Harvard or Oxford returned at last to the Sun Dance and the greasy-haired women of his tribe. But others again pointed to the fact that in his most criminal days he always carried and read his Bible, while never pretending to be anything but what he really was.

"There is no reason," said one of the articles, "why the scandalous sinner, damned a hundred times over, should

not admire and long for the quiet courts of the Lord, the happiness to which he had no claim."

It was further said that Minden had the characteristics of a dual personality, loving the good things humanly and truly, but doing the bad things wilfully and voluntarily. Minden read this particular article many times, and it seemed to him to be true. Ever since a child he had been susceptible to all these things which were the possession of the prayer people, whilst something drove him into acts which, never cruel nor malignant, were still criminal. While he had risked his life in breaking the law many times, he had also risked it in support of the law.

One day, as he sat reading this article, which greatly fascinated him, he said to himself at last:

"It's funny, but the one thing seemed just as natural to me as the other. It was always like that. I liked good company better than bad, but I couldn't keep from doing the bad things, an' I didn't want to keep from doing them —not till now; not till I got my eyes on my little gal. By gracious, when I saw her the first time after all them years, I felt as if I could say to my right foot, 'You walked me into the broad path, and off you've got to come with a knife an' a saw'; an' to my left hand, 'You held my gun, while the other took the oof, an' off you've got to come with a knife an' a saw.' That's your dooal personality, I s'pose. I ain't never been one personality till now. Since I come to Askatoon I feel, I truly feel, grace in me. When my little gal looks at me I sense as if I'd like to be burnt at the stake, jest to show her what I'd do to be the same to her. I wonder how long it'll last!"

Trouble came into his eyes suddenly. "I wonder how long it'll last," he repeated. "I wonder how long it'll go on like this—just us three in the only home I've ever

had since I was a little boy? If it does go on, my, won't it be too good for tastin'! It can't though, I feel it; an' I've got to make the most of it. Cora's got to get married, an' she's got to marry an all-righter, a one-in-a-million, twenty-two carat fella, so as when I go, I'll know she's all right. She ain't goin' to marry a man like me. I looked all right, an' I spoke all right to her mother—the angel that she was, an' I deceived her as to what I reely was. Cora's got Amandy's beauty—an' mind—an' she'll break her heart if she don't marry the right kind o' man. She ought to marry a President or a young Cecil Rhodes—that's the kind of man she oughter marry, high bred and highsteppin'."

He laughed a little to himself. "I wonder what they'd think of that at prayer-meetin'! Their idea'd be she oughter marry in her own station, down among the druggists an' the undertakers; but I've traveled a lot, an' I've seen the pearl-necklace ladies, the finger-bowl ladies, an' rigged out like them she'd look fifty times as good."

Suddenly a cloud passed over his face. "There's the dooal personality again. Here am I converted and saved, an' belongin' to the Methodists, bein' the revivalist that held the fort when the garrison fell sick of a fever—here am I talkin' as if I was a slave to the high-muggery of this here world. But wait; ain't there as good men among the blue-veined high-muggers as down here 'mongst the narrow-minded children of the Lord? I ain't as humble as I ought to be, for I feel as good as any of 'em, an' I don't like their tastes. They want hell-fire preaching', an' praise God for the elect; they want to live humble before the Lord, yet they're graspin' after riches all the time. But I want to be like Solomon—sit on a throne, with a cornucopeey in each hand, pourin' out beautiful gold five-dollar

pieces for humanity. I want to be good like him, an' write the Song o' Solomon, an' the Book o' Ruth, an' the Proverbs; but I want to do it from the steps of a palace. That's Bill Minden, an' I guess I ain't a Christian in the sense it's understood. I guess I belong to the old order —them that lived a thousand years before Matthew begun to write. . . . But she's got to marry, an' I don't like the lot that surrounds her now, my little gal."

He was still brooding and talking to himself, with the newspaper in his hand, when Cora entered upon him, her eyes sparkling, her cheeks showing nothing of the fatigue of the six hours in the school-room. She had had a long walk on the prairie since school time, and her good health surrounded her like a cloak of gold. Minden stood up when she entered.

"Now, I wish you wouldn't do that, Mr. Mayor," she said. "You're always so polite, though you're old enough to be my father."

A flush stole slowly over his face. "I shouldn't mind being your father; I'd be good to you," he answered.

She nodded. "I know that, but my own father was kind to me—yes, beautifully kind. He always seemed sorry when I went out and always glad when I came in. Tell me," she added, "were you ever married?"

He looked her straight in the eyes as he answered, "Yes, I was married, but my wife died a year after."

"And you had no children?" she asked, but as though it were a fact.

"Yes, I had a child."

"Oh! She isn't living?"

"I lost her," he answered. "I lost her soon after her mother died."

"How long ago was that?" she asked, with a deep curiosity in her face.

"Why, years and years ago—more'n twenty years ago, I guess."

"And you never have had any real home since?" she inquired softly.

"Not till I come here to Askatoon, an' you and your mother come and made a home for me here. Now I feel like a family man—as if I had my own family under my own roof."

"And you still remember your little girl that died?" she asked, with sympathetic eyes.

"Whenever I look at you I remember her," he answered slowly.

"So I'm a kind of adopted daughter to you, ain't I?" she returned.

"Well, it's almost like the real thing," he said, his face aflush, but holding himself sternly quiet.

She laughed very prettily, and yet there was a touch of sadness in her eyes, a lurking something which was always behind the mirth of her face; and it was in his eyes also.

"Shut your eyes," she said, softly.

He did so. She went up to him and touched his cheek with her lips. "I'm your lost girl," she said, sweetly, little knowing of the truth.

It required all his will to prevent his pouring out a father's accumulated love of twenty-two years upon her; but he mastered himself in time.

"Lord love us, but that was good!" he said, without any excess of emotion, and they both smiled as though it was but a trifling matter between them.

"I'm not going to do it again," she said, however. "I know you're fond of me, but the world wouldn't under-

stand. I don't believe mother would understand, though kissing you is different from kissing any other man."

"Do men kiss you?" he asked, frowning slightly in anxiety.

"Men don't kiss me, but a man did kiss me, and I hated it," she answered. A shadow crossed her face. "I don't like to remember it," she continued. "I liked him in a way, and then all at once I didn't like him, because he took hold of me and kissed me. I wanted to strike him in the face, I hated him so. I don't know what it was, but first he seemed respectful to me, the same as most other men, and then he acted like some wild animal, and it made me sick."

"Was it here in this house?" he asked, almost trembling with anger, yet hiding it from her.

"No, not here," she replied.

"I'm glad it didn't happen here," he declared. "I'm glad it didn't happen while you was here with me."

"Men don't bother me since I came to live here, Mayor," she remarked. "It was when I was alone with mother they did it. Oh, there are men—but no, I won't tell you. Bygones are bygones."

"Did you never care for any man?" he asked. "Did you never love any man at all?"

"No, never," she answered. "I never loved anyone except my own father, and then I am very fond of you."

A great light shone in his eyes. "Happen a man'll come some day. Wouldn't you like to love a man and get married?" he asked.

She looked him frankly in the face, and her eyes softened. "When the right man comes along I'll marry him just as quick as he wants me to—or almost," she answered.

About ten o'clock that night, after hard work as mayor and in his hotel, Minden was sitting in his office, which had a door opening on the garden behind the hotel. From it a few steps led down to the grassy level.

With foresight, not to say cunning, he had placed his office where he could not be reached by the casual passerby —by the loafer, the book-agent, or the bore. It was some distance from the rooms occupied by Mrs. Finley and Cora, and it was also some yards away from the central hall where visitors were received and names registered.

He had greatly enjoyed the seclusion, and there were times when he worked for hours with his accounts and at the detailed business of the mayoralty and the hotel. These details and calculations gave him much trouble at first, because he had always been indifferent to money in the small pieces and hated detail—the tiny items of life, as it were.

His whole scheme of existence had been too large, too episodical, to admit of precision and finesse; but now when he felt he could tear accounts, books, and letters to pieces, and scatter them to the four winds of heaven, one thought held him steady, kept him smiling at his task. It was Cora. It was worth any amount of drudgery to be near her, and something of a conventional sense of duty belonging to the Christian life worked through all he did. Perhaps it was as much habit as anything else, but there it was: the pious system with its etiquette, rules, and discipline worked upon him.

He had sat in his office till nearly an hour past closing-time, absorbed, puzzled, stubbornly determined to work out his business problems without calling in an accountant's assistance. A pipe rested by his hand untouched, the clock ticked on unnoticed. Presently he was dis-

turbed by a noise in the garden. Then he heard his own name called, and someone stumbled on the steps.

He went to the door quickly, opened it, and looked out into the night. It was very dark. He stepped back quickly and turned the gas low, then he went to the open door again. Now he could make out a stooping figure at the bottom of the steps.

"Help, Mr. Minden, help! I'm hurt!" a voice whispered to him.

An instant later Minden had the stranger in his office lying on a sofa. A little trickle of blood showed on the floor, and there was another spot on the lower step of the stair at the doorway. Minden asked no questions at once, but with the instinct of one who had used firearms much, he found a wound in the man's arm and the flesh of the side. Stripping the victim of his coat and waistcoat, and tearing open his shirt, he proceeded with a frontiersman's skill to dress the wounds, cutting up with a pair of scissors a towel which hung by the little washstand, and using his big red handkerchief to bind the bandages.

Instinct told him that here was a mystery, a story not for the open day.

"What did you come to my back-door for?" he asked of the haggard-looking young man with the handsome face and the round soldier-like head.

The blue eyes, troubled by physical pain, looked straight into his own. "I might have been seen—the police!" the wounded man said.

"What you been doing?" Minden asked, still at work with the bandages.

"I knew I'd be safe with you, Mr. Mayor," was the reply. "You've been in trouble yourself for what you did

and meant to do. I'm in trouble now for what I did and didn't mean to do."

"That's a fool's game," remarked Minden. "It's bad enough to get into trouble with the law for what you mean to do, but the other makes me sick. You must have been an idjit."

"Perhaps not so much as you think," was the weary reply.

"Well, anyway, what did you come to me for?" Minden asked authoritatively.

"I know you belong to the Methodists now, Mr. Minden," was the quick answer; "but you've been through such a lot yourself, if the papers say what's right, and I was sure you'd help a fellow who only made one mistake. I didn't know what the McMahons were when I joined up with them a few weeks ago, dead broke, with a mine worth millions behind me!"

Minden stopped his first-aid surgical work suddenly, put his hands on his hips, and looked down at the young face made so old with suffering.

"You—you joined up with the McMahons? That gang's the worst lot of horse-thieves above the forty-ninth parallel. You got into traces with them—that lot!"

The young man made a protesting gesture. "I didn't know this part of the country. I've been mining for the last two years. I'm an Englishman. I come from Norfolk—my family's all right. They belong——" but as though to stop himself from bragging he paused.

Minden went on with the bandaging again. "Of course you were English, or you couldn't ha' been such a fool. You belong to the way-up people, eh? To the ten thousand-acre lot, eh? Up among the dooks and earls and lords?"

The young man nodded mournfully. He did not seem very proud of it. "I came out over two years ago with a man who had been here before, and knew about the mine. First we tried one place in the claim, then another; then we struck it, but not so awful rich. We got capital and used it; then we wanted more capital, and we couldn't get it. The mine wasn't rich enough to bring money in. We were three partners, one being a native of the West here. They left the mine at last and came down to Rowney City to have a last try for money.

"I had a lot of faith in that mine. I offered to buy the others' share. I had five thousand dollars which I hadn't touched—not in my worst days. I found I could buy that whole mine—their share of it—for fifteen thousand dollars, so I gave them my last five thousand dollars, and my note for the rest, and a mortgage on the machinery. After they went away I struck a reef, a drift that was twice as good as what we'd had, and I believe it's three times as good further on. I left a man in charge of the mine and struck south, where my horse died at the McMahon's ranch. I bought one from them, and I hadn't quite enough money and offered to work it out. That's why I stayed there on the ranch—just a few days, it was. I didn't see anything wrong in the outfit. They told me day before yesterday they were going after a bunch of horses they'd bought, and I was to go with them. I went."

"An' you found out that the bunch of horses wasn't their own, an' the Riders come down on you?"

"That's it," answered the young man, drawing himself up to a sitting posture. "I only found out the truth at the last minute, and then I went hoofing it to get away. The McMahons got away safe, and so did I, except for

this bullet-wound and my horse shot under me as I rode away hell-for-leather."

Minden's eyes were alight; the old virus was working in his veins. "It was a McMahon horse you rode, eh? It was branded with an M?"

The young man nodded.

"Say, that's real good," answered Minden. "The police'll likely think it was another McMahon moke. There used to be four McMahons, but there's only three now. Phil, the best of them, vamoosed South. They'll think you was him, p'raps. How did you get here?"

"I got the trail and stumbled along somehow, bleeding till my boots were half full."

"What made you steer for me?" asked Minden.

"Because of what you'd done yourself, as I said. I believed you'd hide me, for I didn't mean to do wrong. I didn't realize the situation. I saw you once on the Fraser River. I saw you give fifty dollars to a poor tramp of a fellow who'd been ruined by bad luck. I hadn't anywhere to go that seemed safe, except to you."

"But I'm a Christian now," remarked Minden dryly, and with a glimmer of irony.

"You were a Christian then on the Fraser River when you gave a man a chance to begin life again. You'll stand by me, won't you? I don't believe the Riders have traced me here. You'll hide me, and get the doctor to look after me, and see me through, won't you? I'll give you a share of my mine. . . . Oh, it's all right!" he added, when he saw a smile, half cynical, half compassionate, come upon Minden's face. "You know all about mines, and you must take three or four days off, and go and look at it. Make your own investigations, and you'll see!"

"Say, that mine doesn't cut any ice with me," Minden

responded. "I don't sell my private hospitality. That's not the trouble. I do it because the spirit moves me, an' you can't buy that. You can't buy it for money no more'n you could bite into a piece of iron with your ivory teeth. Who's your father, and what's your name?" he added brusquely.

"I call myself Mark Hayling out here, but my real name is Mark Sheldon, and my father is Lord William Sheldon."

"Who was your grandfather?"

"He—he was the Duke of Bolton."

Minden whistled. "Well, a man has got to be good to a dook's son just the same as to the son of a tinsmith," he remarked, dryly. "You can stay here, although it's against the Christian religion to shelter a man from the law—and I'm mayor! If what you say is true, though—an' I believe it is—an' you was trapped into that McMahon scrape, I'll help you out. I'll hide you, an' give you my wine and milk without money and without price, mayor or no mayor."

"If you looked at the mine you'd——"

"Pshaw, the mine can wait!" interjected Minden. "I'll have a look at it all right, but there's no hurry. There's a hurry, though, about gettin' a doctor here, for fear your wounds git poisoned, an' I've got to find a room to put you to bed in. Then about that doctor. I've got to tell him everything. He's all right, he's as good as gold; he's been here ever since the place started almost. I'd let him see the inside of my mind an' its safe deposit, an' that's sayin' a lot."

He paused reflectively, and then, after a minute, added: "Tell me now, do you think the police got a glimpse o' your face?"

"I'm certain they didn't," was the reply. "Bill McMahon opened fire from behind the trees—it was dusk; and then we made tracks. I don't think they saw me even when they hit me. It must have been a chance bullet."

"That's all O. K. It makes things easy. Son, we'll save you, if it can be done. Have you got a mother?"

"Yes, I have a mother," was the slow reply, "the best that ever was."

Minden nodded sagely. "There's lots of good mothers in this world; there's one in this house; an' I've got to rout her out now, an' have her make a bed for you on the next floor up. If you can't walk I can carry you. You've got to have somethin' to eat an' drink. The three of us can look after you all right—anyhow, two of us can. That's no reason Miss Finley shouldn't get you some hot milk while her mother is getting your bed ready. Think you'll be all right for a few minutes, son?"

"I'll be right enough. This is good enough for me. I don't mind about the doctor; tell him everything."

A few minutes later Mrs. Finley was making the bed ready in a room a short distance from her own. She had already gone to bed when Minden called her, but Cora sat reading in her own room, and, hearing Minden's voice at her mother's door, came out into the hall. Briefly Minden told her the story, and she had quickly repeated it to her mother.

Presently she herself was below stairs scalding milk, into which she poured a beaten-up egg and sherry. It is hard to tell what sort of man she expected to see in the office. Minden had said nothing about the youth, about his handsomeness, and soldierly appearance, nor about his name or family; and she had imagined some rough Westerner with a red handkerchief round his neck, with

a hard-bitten face and rough bony hands. When she entered the office, Sheldon was on his feet, leaning on Minden's shoulder, for he was six inches taller. He stood, head bent forward, with that piteous look of despair which seizes youth when checked on its course. His look of suffering softened the almost iron lines of the shapely head, and gave a touch of poetry to a determined face, which had more uprightness, persistence, courage, and good humor than aught else.

Her hand tightened almost spasmodically on the glass of milk she held as her glance fell on the wounded refugee. Her eyes met his in one long look, and a wonderful smile came to his lips. She shivered, however, as she went forward and held the milk to his lips.

Half an hour later the Young Doctor had a talk with Minden in his office. "He will get well, unless there's something we can't see," remarked the Young Doctor, decisively. "All you ask is that I keep my tongue still, and I'm not supposed to know, unless you tell me, that the law is after the young fellow. And you're mayor! I like the young man," he added, reflectively. "He has eyes that no Ananias ever had, and he has looks, too; but there's a young lady we both know in this house, Mayor. Have you thought of that?"

Minden nodded, and turned away his head. After a moment he said, "Yes, that's all right. She can take care of herself."

CHAPTER VI

MINDEN TO THE RESCUE

WEEKS went by. In spite of Minden's powers of self-control he found himself at times so agitated that more than once he mounted his horse, rode ten or fifteen miles into the prairie and back again, "to work off steam." When the conviction came to him that Sheldon was to play a part in Cora's life, he began to reflect, and then to trouble himself greatly.

Here was Sheldon, a comet with a long tail of travel, adventure, and life—life topped by a tuft of involuntary crime; penniless, homeless, helpless; and here was Cora, the seed and stem, the bud and flower of a community, to whom men and women pointed as one who could be both beautiful and good; was she to link herself with such a man of mystery and misdemeanor, with no future except a problematical scoop out of a problematical gold mine?

If Sheldon had spoken the whole truth then the solution of the problem might not be so hard, seeing Mrs. Finley's attitude towards him. Like many a woman who has had a man in her home and has lost him, so losing also the opportunity for mothering, the opportunity afforded Mrs. Finley by Sheldon's arrival was like a gift from Heaven. Yet she remained watchful and concerned; for no matter how reputable the young man—Minden had not told her all—he certainly had not "got religion," and she did her best to keep Cora from intimacy with him.

When he was able to leave his bedroom, however,

and use Mrs. Finley's sitting room, watching on her part became onerous, with her many exacting daily duties, while Cora's gravitation towards Sheldon was natural and frequent.

The public only knew of his presence in the Rest Awhile Hotel after the Riders of the Plains had reported to the commissioner an encounter with unidentified horse-thieves, though they had good reason to suspect that they were the McMahons. As evidence there was the dead horse ridden by Sheldon, branded with the letter M.

The McMahons, however, were found asleep in their beds when the Riders raided their ranch soon after the encounter. Bill McMahon said that the horse had been stolen from their paddock, and this was borne out by the evidence of hired hands. The McMahons knew what had happened to Sheldon, and where he was, but they knew well, also, that he would remain silent. Before ten days had gone interest in it was replaced by other sensational events, demanding the attention of the Riders.

Concerning his relations with the McMahons, Minden believed that Sheldon spoke the truth; but there was the question of his origin. A previous mayor of the town had been an Englishman, and he had fortified himself for his office by a good reference library. One or two volumes like Kelly's "County Families," and "Debrett," were found useful by subsequent mayors when traveling members of "the best families" of Great Britain visited Askatoon.

With a pleasurable yet anxious excitement, and with a little awe, Minden approached these books for a history of Sheldon's family.

His fingers had never trembled on the trigger, nor had had a tremor in time of danger, but they shook a little

now—perhaps it was age creeping on—as he turned over the page to the index letter S. After a few moments of attentive search they suddenly halted on a page.

Yes, there it was. There was the celebrated genealogy and history of the dukes of Bolton; there was the name of Mark Sheldon, grandson of the sixth duke, sometime of the Household Cavalry, now a fugitive from justice, impounded in the Rest Awhile Hotel of Askatoon. There he was, the grandson of a duke, in Bill Minden's house, talking to Bill Minden and his daughter, and her reputed mother, just as though they had been brought up together! But that was due to a kind of manner Sheldon had, a manner Minden had seen among Indians, Chinese, and mountaineers.

The idea of Cora taking to the grandson of a duke and of his taking to her pleased him, but it also startled him. A kind of panic took possession of him. What might have been a splendid prospect for an ambitious eye suddenly became a moor of blackened gorse and heather to Minden's vision. Then it was he lunged up and down his office talking aloud to himself, tempted even to blasphemy, yet not yielding.

If the class-leaders of Grace Methodist Church could have seen him in such a state they would have declared him imperfectly saved. They would have said it was his duty to take the whole matter to the Throne of Grace. No doubt they were right, for the old Adam was still much alive in the mayor of Askatoon.

No repose came to Minden's mind; none could come until he had tested the last and most important statement made by Sheldon of the mine and its imprisoned fortunes. It seemed mean to suspect him of untruth. In his heart of hearts he believed, but a great anxiety con-

cerning the welfare of his daughter forced him to be cautious. Had he not thrown the young man in her way by harboring him?

Why not visit the mine, and find out the facts beyond peradventure? He could not bring himself to do it, however, until fully three weeks after the patient's removal from Mrs. Finley's end of the house to his own, where Sheldon showed himself in the public rooms of the hotel.

On the first day he made his appearance in the public dining room, who should appear but one of his sometime partners of the Sink-or-Swim Mine!

Straightway Sheldon sent for Minden and introduced the two. Sheldon's late partner was on his way East. It could be seen he was cynical concerning the prospects of the mine, but the main truth of Sheldon's story was established, and the erstwhile partner left with mingled admiration for Sheldon's courage and pity for his fatuity.

It was otherwise with Bill Minden. Within twenty-four hours he was on his way North to investigate the mine, taking with him an expert assayist. Something of the old zeal of the coach-road and the switchman's red light filled the mind of William Minden, Esq., mayor, school-trustee, class-leader, and revivalist, as he neared his destination. He arrived, he explored, he found; he saw, and saw enough.

Thirty-six hours later, in his hotel office at Askatoon, he sat closeted with his unpaying guest. Neither Sheldon, Mrs. Finley, nor Cora had known the cause of his absence during the preceding four days.

"What are you going to do about that mine?" he said to Sheldon. "And what are you going to do anyhow?"

"I am writing for two hundred pounds—a thousand

dollars," was Sheldon's answer. "It's coming from Montreal. It was sent there on deposit for me from my father. That will pay my bill here, won't it?"

Minden made a wide, generous gesture. "You ain't got any bill here, son," he said, "'cept the doctor's bill. He's got to be paid, of course, but your name ain't on my books. I was once nussed myself when I was shot by a constable. I was five weeks in the house where two women and a man tended me, an' they wouldn't take anything from me; but they never knew how the mortgage was lifted from their farm. That I done in return for goods received. They never made any charge on me—none at all, and I ain't makin' any charge on you, I guess."

Sheldon smiled. It was a shy and restrained smile. "I'll remember that, and I'll lift a mortgage for you when the Sink-or-Swim is making five thousand dollars a day," he remarked.

"That's what I want to know. What about your mine? Is it movin'?"

A shadow crossed the young man's face, but he looked straight into Minden's eyes. "I haven't the least idea how I'm going to get the cash to make that mine move, but I believe in it, as I believe I've got two hands and two eyes and a mouth that never lost a tooth. I haven't begun to stir yet, but there's going to be stirring; the mine must move on. I want twenty thousand dollars to put that money-machine in motion again and give me a chance to show a steady output for awhile.

"Just as soon as I can pay for more stamps, just as soon as I can pay wages, I'm going to pull the beginning of a fortune out of her. There's a good many million dollars in this country, and there's a lot of men who have

got money and want to make more; well, I'll give them their chance. But mind you, Mr. Minden, I am going to have and keep three-quarters of the stock of the Sink-or-Swim, and I'd rather see it shut up for ever than not own fifty per cent. of its stock. If it proved a success —and it will—and I didn't have half of it, I'd go grousing all the rest of my life. I'm not going to grouse; I'm going to have all that's in that mine up to seventy-five per cent. I haven't the least idea how it is to be done, but there's my policy."

"I've got idea plenty how it can be done," answered Minden. "How would you like to give me a mortgage on the mine an' take your twenty thousand dollars with you?"

The young man's eyes stared hard at Minden, his hands resting on his knees seemed to clinch spasmodically. He doubted what he had heard.

"Don't make fun of a man that's down," he said. "It's one thing I can't joke about—that mine. If you were to swear on the Bible what you've said just now, I'd ask you to swear it again."

Minden got up, opened a desk, and took out a little black Bible having that greasy look which the wax of time gives. He laid it on the table between them, sat down and placed his hand on it.

"Once, and then twice, an' then as many times as you like, Mr. Sheldon," he said in a quiet voice.

Sheldon got to his feet, placed his hands on the table and leaned over towards Minden with a devouring look. "You mean it? Why, you've never seen the place. I might be lying to you."

"Yes, you might, you naturally might, but you naturally ain't, because you ain't built that way," answered

Minden. "I know all about that mine. I've been there. I took the best assayist in the country with me. I know what I'm doing. You can have the twenty thousand dollars, with a mortgage on the whole mine; but I'd rather buy straight out a quarter of the mine, if you'd take me on as a quiet, sleepin' partner."

The young man sank down in his chair, and dropped his head into his hands. "This takes the starch out of me," he said brokenly. "I apologize; it's everything to me. I was just starting life again, and I was dead stopped. I couldn't go to my father and ask for more; he has done all he can. So I was going out like a commercial traveler to drum up cash, with that beautiful mine just waiting to pour itself out; and now here you're starting me fair again!"

He got to his feet once more. "I'll make it go; it shall be a winner," he said.

His eyes were moist and his hands trembling, but the look on his face was the look of ten men facing a hundred, but sure that the end of the battle was theirs.

"Say, son, keep cool," said Minden cheerfully. "It's all right. I'll give you the check in an hour. Steady now, steady on, son."

He had his hands on the young man's shoulders, and then all at once he released them. He had used a very common friendly word of Western greeting—the word *son;* and now, suddenly, it had taken a new and tremendous significance. He flushed and turned away to his desk.

"Is it going to be a mortgage or a sale?" he asked over his shoulder.

"A sale, of course," Sheldon answered.

CHAPTER VII

BY THE WAYSIDE

In the late afternoon of the day when Minden gave him twenty thousand dollars for a quarter of his mine, Sheldon took the air for the first time since his coming to the "Rest Awhile."

Ever since the one-sided bargain was made he had been in a dream. Wonderful visions of the future flitted through his brain. For two or three hours it had worked excitedly, and he had defined his plans for the immediate future with a sharp decision natural to him. There was much of the soldier about him—not the soldier of routine, rather the soldier of tactics and strategy. The twenty thousand dollars would set the mine working, would increase the machinery, would provide for further prospecting and a search for the drift which, dropped at one point, must be picked up again somewhere else.

He was impatiently eager to get the Sink-or-Swim well forward again before the winter set in. He made his plans with the idea that he would leave Askatoon within a week.

As he slowly traveled the main street to the bridge crossing the river, gratitude to Minden possessed him. No compunctions existed in his mind as to the source of Minden's wealth. If the conscience of Minden, who was a class-leader, permitted him to use the money got without labor and investment, without inheritance or toil, but which, perhaps, other people had got through such sources and had delivered up to Minden under pressure, his own conscience would not trouble itself. Besides, this tainted money was to be used in a virtuous enterprise which, if

successful, would make his future secure, make good, as the prairie people say, the promise of his youth, redeem his past.

As he neared the end of the street opening on to the bridge, two men drove past him in a buggy. They were Bill and Matt McMahon.

As they passed him, without reining in their horses, Bill McMahon leaned over the side of the buggy and with a savage sneer said: "God, but you had a lot of luck! Makin' for jail you dropped into the bosom of the family—keep your mouth shut, damn you!"

"Yes, I had a lot of luck," Sheldon said to himself as they drove on. "I might have been doing hard labor, with nothing in front of me at all, at all; and here I am with better chances than I've ever known."

He turned and looked after the McMahons, a curtain of dust rolling up behind them on their swift journey into the town. "You devils," he exclaimed, "something worse than jail will bring you up with a sharp turn!"

With a shudder and a swift upward motion of the hands, as though freeing himself from an ugly thought, he moved slowly across the bridge, and was making for Nolan Doyle's ranch Mayo, when he saw another buggy approaching.

Suddenly a faintness came over him. The sun was still hot, though the day was well past, but he had walked too fast for the first outing after his illness. He stepped to one side, and leaned against a solitary tree, which threw a timorous shade over a small portion of the gold-brown prairie. He did not heed the on-coming buggy, his eyes were bent upon the ground in thought, for the meeting with the McMahons had unnerved him. It snatched him out of his dream, back into the danger where he had

been, and he realized with a force never before felt what he had escaped. Indeed, but the luck had been with him!

Presently he was conscious that the buggy had stopped beside him, and before he saw its occupant he abstractedly watched the surf of dust settling at the wheels. Then he heard what brought his head up quickly, and sent into his eyes a delighted look of recognition.

"What are you doing here, Mr. Sheldon?" a charming voice asked. "Well, I never! You ought to be whipped. Who let you out? You aren't fit to walk yet, but I suppose you've come all the way from home."

He nodded, and smiled with a curious meaning. "Yes, I have walked all the way from *home*," he answered.

It was strange that she should speak of the Rest Awhile Hotel as home. Yet it was home in the sense that he had never known home for very many years. It was home because she was there, the daughter of a woman who had an income of five hundred dollars a year. He had been born in a castle, he had been friendly with a hundred county families with their marriageable daughters, yet the naturalness, the self-respect, and the sweet musing charm of this girl had been to him like a cleansing shower through which the sun shone.

Three weeks in the Rest Awhile Hotel, caravansary as it was, had made him feel that it was more home to him than any other place in the world. The companionship of a reformed criminal and the finely austere friendship of an elderly woman who had never seen the ocean or a great city, had brought a new understanding of life to him. With that had come something else which this girl with the faint rose in her cheeks and the mysterious yet frank look in her blue eyes represented.

The other two had brought him friendship; she had

brought him he knew not what—he only felt that where she was he wanted to be. When she was there he wanted not to speak; and when she was gone he counted the hours and the minutes till she returned. When she returned he counted the minutes until she must leave him again; and when she was with him he invented a hundred devices for keeping her.

"Come, get in," she said. "I'll drive you back home."

Did she, too, then, regard the Rest Awhile Hotel as home? What was it, indeed, but a gipsy tent to which all might come and pay and pass on their way! The truth is, she had never spoken of it in that way before. It had come to her as she looked at him, pale and overdone, leaning against that solitary tree.

"Get in," she repeated, with a pretty authoritative flick of the whip.

He smiled and came forward. "I'm not one of your pupils that you can use a whip on," he said in mock protest.

"Yes, you are my pupil," she answered. "At any rate, you're not old enough to know what you ought to do, and a little whipping might do you a great deal of good."

"Did you get a great deal of whipping sometime or other?" he asked.

"I never needed it. I never was whipped in my life. My mother never even slapped me once," she indignantly remarked.

"Then what made you so good?" he questioned.

She laughed gaily. "I was born good I suppose," she answered mockingly.

He shook his head. "Then you had a better chance than most of us. Look what it costs me to be any sort

of good. Look what it costs Mr. Minden to be any sort of good."

A strange, almost rapt look came into the girl's face. "Yes, it is wonderful about him," she said; "oh, but wonderful! Do come."

He put one hand on the rail of the buggy-seat and the other on the dash-board, and was about to mount when he stopped and said, "I don't want to drive home. I want to be in the open air awhile yet. Haven't you got an hour you can spare before supper?"

"Yes, of course," she answered frankly. "I have just been over to Nolan Doyle's ranch, seeing that new baby that Mrs. Doyle has adopted. I've nothing else to do except to see that you don't spoil all the nursing you've had the last three weeks by walking yourself sick. How would you like to go down the river bank to the old Hudson Bay Company fort, about two miles? It's shady there, and I've got a fishing-rod and line hid in the fort. There's a splendid place for rock bass just below the fort. You'd love it. And if you really want to do any work you can dig for bait. What's more, Mrs. Doyle insisted on my having some tea-cakes and a bottle of what she calls cream nectar. So we can have a real picnic. You ought to have some fun, you know, after being cooped up in that——"

He interrupted her. "In that happy home," he exclaimed, seating himself comfortably beside her. "I really was in prison, but I wasn't cooped up."

"In prison—I don't understand," she rejoined.

Half turning, he was about to look her straight in the eyes, but he did not do so; and he was wise.

"Still, I am a captive," he repeated, with a sidelong glance, as though to see how she took it.

She did take it with a sudden little flush, but coquetry

was native to her, though she had used it so little, and she answered: "Yes, you were captive. The Young Doctor was the jailer, and we other three were the warders, whose duty was to see that you atoned for your crimes."

She had turned the horse into the trail leading to the fort, and flicked it gently with her whip. Unconsciously she wished to reach the goal quickly. So far she had only talked with him within four walls, and she was not used to these living minutes with him in the open air. Somehow, it had just a feeling of impropriety. This, of course, was absurd, but behind her natural openness there was a curious reticence and sensitiveness, and it was as though she hastened to the river and the old fort so that the world's eyes could not be upon her as she sat beside him.

Atoned for his crimes! A strange look passed over Sheldon's face. Yes, he had paid something of the price of atonement, but not all. She did not know about the horse-stealing. Minden had not told her. Suddenly he made up his mind that he would tell her the whole truth. But not yet; he would wait until they reached the fort. He also was seized by her desire for seclusion.

"This is a real bit of luck," he said. "I was hungry, and you bring me some cakes; I was thirsty, and you bring me some drink; I was dying for some sport, and you've got a fishing-rod. I wanted to see you"—his voice altered—"and here you are. This is my lucky day. Yes, it is my lucky day," he added. "No man ever had so much in one day as I've had. I was let out of prison to-day, and someone met me at the prison-gates, and offered to give me a new start in life, and then you came, and——"

He paused as she looked at him inquiringly. She caught the undertone of sentiment in his voice, but she

grasped also at some deeper meaning. She did not question him nor speak; she waited. She had a woman's instinct that he had something to tell her, and she had a further instinct that what he had to tell her was not what a number of men had tried to tell her in her short life. Of late there had grown a feeling within her that she wanted to know about his past life and what he was going to do in the future. Perhaps her wish was to be granted now.

A little while later, as they sat on the high bank of the river, a fishing-rod in her hand, his back against a tree, with the bait by his side, he said to her as she gazed intently into the water: "So you think it's wonderful that Minden can be as good as he is with all he has had to fight against?"

She flicked her line into the water, then turned to him with shining steadfast eyes. "Yes, I think it is truly wonderful; but there must have been more good than bad in him at the start. I don't believe people become good that are bad at the start; but if they are good at the start, then I think that childhood and the memory and influence of it is the master of a man's or a woman's fate. Everything in the world loses its hold on us except childhood. Mr. Minden must have been right just at the start. I've heard him speak about his wife—it was beautiful. He had a child and lost her. Isn't it a pity? But if he couldn't go straight, perhaps it was better the child died. If she had ever known what he became it might have killed her. A woman can't stand being shamed by a man she loves. She may hide it, but down, down, at the bottom of her heart it's an ache that goes on and on and on."

"How do you know?" he asked in a low voice.

"Why, just by instinct, and by watching. In a place

like this, with thousands of people, you can see and hear a good many life-stories."

"Minden is the most contradictory man I've ever known," he said after a moment. "I agree with you; he must have been right at the start. But what a wonderful thing, when he has lived two-thirds of his time out, that he can rightabout-face and live as though he had never done any wrong. He's mayor now and school-trustee! It needs enormous will-power. Think, too, of what that will-power might have meant if it had been given to the straight things from the start."

There was a brief interlude in which the girl detached from her fish-hook a fine bass, which had made a gallant struggle, but after he had baited the hook again, and she had thrown her line, she said:

"It isn't will-power that has made Mr. Minden what he is now. Will-power couldn't do it. It was a Power Above that he reached for and got."

He looked at her with a curious searching intentness. He had never known anything like this. Here was simple Christian faith in a character sportive, cheerful, practical, even world-wise in its own way and a little coquettish, too.

Surely it was contradictory, and yet she seemed completely real. If he had known the exact truth he would have realized that she was Bill Minden, but what a different Bill Minden! All Bill's contradictions and paradoxes were here, but native virtue and goodness had prevailed in her; while Minden's native instinct for virtue and goodness had been ruled by waywardness, the spirit of adventure, and a loosely held moral sense.

"Do you know," she said dreamily, "I never met so kind a man as Mr. Minden. In spite of being so busy as mayor and with the hotel, he thinks of a hundred little

things to make you happy. Somehow in spite of all he ever did I can't bring myself to think hateful things about him. Mother did, though. At first she was his enemy, but I never was. I like being with him. He's so modest he makes you feel that if he had to choose between you and the angels he would choose you!"

"Well, so would I, if it comes to that," was Sheldon's quick comment.

He saw a flush mount to her cheek, but she did not look at him, and he did not follow up his tender attack.

"Do you think he'll stick it out?" he asked. "Don't you believe he'll tire of being what he is now, and will backslide? Won't there be a reaction when the charm of respectability has worn off?"

She flicked her line almost angrily out of the water and in again, and her eyes flashed as she turned to him.

"Haven't I said it isn't his will or anything that belongs to him that's doing it? He gets help from God."

How invincibly sincere Cora was! There was no cant, no sentimentality in her voice or words. In the circles Sheldon had frequented that kind of religion had not existed—supreme philosophy, rather, for it did not sound like religion. It made him feel greatly secure where she was concerned.

"Well, perhaps you are right," Sheldon replied. "There's no sweetness like that of running straight. I was good once. Yes, I really think I was good at the start," he added, and then he paused.

He saw the fish-pole suddenly dip in her hands, as though they weakened; he noticed the sudden arrest of those indefinable motions of the body at ease, then her head turned slowly towards him, and with painful wonder she said:

"Haven't you always been good?"

"I'm going to tell you," he answered. "I'm going to tell you all about it—all. I want you to know. No one knows all except you, that is, except you when I've told you. But Mr. Minden knows far more than you do. He has been good to me—I knew he would be; that's why I made for him when they shot me for horse-stealing."

He caught the fishing-rod which was dropping from her hands, as her face became white, and her eyes had a bewildered and shocked look. Yet she seemed not to shrink from him, but to hold herself steadily.

"Horse-stealing! . . . I do not believe you. But go on—tell me!" she said in a low, weak voice.

He told her all his past—of his few years in the Household Cavalry, of his getting into debt through baccarat, and being obliged to leave the army; of his joining the *gendarmerie* in Macedonia; then of his final effort to reinstate himself, to make a home and a fortune. He told her of discounted expectations and the selling of reversionary rights in order to make this hunt for gold. Then at last he related the tale of his abandonment of the mine, of his sojourn at the McMahons' ranch, of the horse-raid, of the encounter with the Riders of the Plains, of the bullet in his side and his struggle to reach the Rest Awhile Hotel, and of what Minden had done for him this very day.

"Don't you loathe me for it all—for chucking my life away at the start like that? According to the law of the land I'm a criminal, a horse-thief." He looked at her with intense inquiry.

"You weren't horse-stealing," she protested. "You didn't know the McMahons were stealing the horses. You said so yourself just now."

"And you believe me?"

She looked him wonderingly in the eyes. "Why, of course I believe you."

"Though I'm an Episcopalian—and never had religion, as you Methodists say."

"Well, I suppose some Episcopalians get to heaven," she answered demurely.

"Don't you think what Mr. Minden has done for me is one of the biggest things one man ever did for another?" he asked presently. "What do you suppose made him do it?"

A mist came into her eyes and a rapt expression to her face. "Perhaps he felt you ought to have your chance," she answered. "Perhaps if somebody sometime had done the same to him he mightn't have had so much to be sorry for. Don't you think that's it?"

"I thought so at first," he replied, "but I'm not so sure now. I can't understand it."

"He treats me almost as if I belonged to him," she added, in a hushed sort of voice. "I keep wondering how he ever could have been bad at all."

Suddenly Sheldon seemed to pull himself together. "There is one more thing I ought to tell you," he said. "It's not a crime, but it was a bad business enough. I wasn't going steady when I did it. . . . At the time I came a cropper with baccarat, I married."

Horror and apprehension seemed to take possession of the girl. She whipped the line out of the water, and laid the rod down upon the ground; then, clasping her hands tightly in her lap, she turned her face away from him towards the farther shore of the river.

"What is there to tell about that?" she asked in a cheerless voice.

"She was a chorus girl in a theatre. I was twenty-two, and I thought she was wonderfully clever and good—she looked so good with her flaxen hair and wide brown eyes. The marriage was secret. Within a year she had run away with a millionaire from the Argentine, and within another year she was dead."

With his last words the rigidity of Cora's figure relaxed, and in a voice scarce above a whisper she said: "You did not divorce her?"

"No, somehow I couldn't do that," he replied heavily.

"Oh, but that was right!" she rejoined. "For she might have repented, and——"

She could get no further, her body swayed backwards and forwards slightly, and her face dropped into her hands.

He moved over quickly to her, leaned down, and looked up to her hidden face.

"Cora! Cora!" he said passionately.

She made no reply, but after an instant her hands dropped tenderly upon his head.

CHAPTER VIII

ENTER THE BRUTE

For a time the world went well with those to whom the Rest Awhile Hotel was a home. No light illumines a face like that which comes from a joyous secret, and Cora's face had that look of transfiguration which belongs to an exalted spirit or to a happy heart. She spiritualized her love, and exalted the object, and all her work and all she did was touched with that grace, that phantom ease which belongs to those whose inner being is as active as their outer life.

She stepped with exceeding lightness; her head was held as high as though the world had never sinned; yet her joy did not make her selfish. Her interest in everything and everybody round her was increased, and to Mrs. Finley it seemed that, as a foster-mother, she had done her duty well.

Minden certainly told her so with quite boisterous delight. There were times when he almost believed he was secure in his converted state and that he was unalterably saved. He prayed with great eloquence; he occasionally preached with fire and wayward originality. Also he did the work of mayor with a cheerful energy which made him as popular as he was conspicuous because of his umbrageous past.

A two days' journey north, Sheldon was playing his part with an almost destructive cheerfulness, working night and day to make the twenty thousand dollars which Minden paid for a quarter of the mine meet current needs. In the end it proved impossible. He had been too optimistic,

had left no margin for accident and the unforeseen; and both accident and the unforeseen occurred.

A breakdown in the mine destroyed machinery; a sudden claim by the original owners of the mine proved a menace to its future. He struggled on under a load five times greater than even Minden thought it to be. Minden had never believed that the twenty thousand dollars would be enough. He was quite prepared to put in much more money when Sheldon had proved himself a "hustler from Hustlerville." He wanted to test the capacity of Cora's future husband, and the result was worth while.

He let Sheldon fight on, himself looking forward to the day when he would step to the rescue with much more money and say, "Halves, partner, halves!" That would mean in the long end that Cora would be a partner with her own husband in the mine about which the West was beginning to speculate seriously.

Everything seemed clear; there were no clouds in the sky. As Minden said to himself, "There ain't no rails on the line." Yet on one of the happiest days he had ever known—that on which his daughter passed her matriculation and her first year's examination at the University in one—accident and penalty, twin sisters of fate, came storming at his door.

Even while he walked with a swagger round the table in the dining room where Cora sat in half-dreaming happiness with the academic certificate in her hand, Brute Penalty was at work in Mrs. Finley's sitting room.

While Minden ejaculated praises at the girl, who had proved that her intellect was as healthy as her body and bloomed like her cheek, Brute Penalty spurted its venom into Mrs. Finley's shocked face. It had burst into her room as she was rising from her knees, where she had

thanked God for the gift of her beloved child. She had never seen a man intoxicated at the Rest Awhile Hotel; and it was a shocking thing to her that the Brute Man, who now reeled into her room, was her own brother.

She had to face a leering, degraded, drunken tramp, whose grinning humor of the lips was denied by the malice of his eyes, the shrewd, malignant look of the blackmailer —for that was what Robert Simeon Struthers suddenly became on this day in the Rest Awhile Hotel.

"Lor'-a-massy!" he exclaimed. "Lor'-a-massy, 'Liza, what a joint this is! Heaven and hell arm in arm for sure. What price a hotel where you can't get a drink not for love or money! But it's all right, it's all right, it's the Rest Awhile Tavern. That's a goldarned good name. I've been travelin' for the last twenty-one years an' I'd like to rest awhile meself. Jerickety, what a bunch you are here! Bill Minden, the boss train-buster, that'd hold up a coach just as you'd cut the top off an egg—Bill Minden doin' the prayer-trick, playin' the sky-pilot, runnin' the town as mayor, lovin' the ladies, joinin' up with 'Liza Struthers that joined the church at ten—oh, what a surprise, two lovely black eyes!"

With a shocked gesture Mrs. Finley stopped him. "Robert, Robert, have you no shame?" she almost wailed.

"No shame! You talk to me like that! What've I got to be ashamed of 'cept my bad luck for years an' years an' years? Everything's been out agen' me. God and the Devil's been conspirin' at me. I ain't had no home. You been the lucky one. Steve Finley left you five hundred dollars a year, and instid of makin' a home for your poor brother Robert, you've been spending your

life and your money on the daughter of that damned thief, Bill Minden."

Mrs. Finley was now as white as the collar at her neck. "Oh, hush, brother Robert!" she said. "Nobody knows that she is William Minden's daughter. You know how he came to give her to me, and no one knows the truth here. She's right happy with me."

"You mean to say she don't know who her real father is?" A blackmailing look came into the brutish eyes. "Well, then, I guess I got a home," he added facetiously. "I guess I can rest awhile at the 'Rest Awhile.' Mr. Bill Minden don't want the world to know that Cora Finley's his daughter, an' that's good enough for me. I got to be took care of, if I keep my mouth shut—see that? Say, why don't he want her to pass as his daughter?"

"Can't you see?" the agonized woman replied. "Don't you know—why, you did know from the start, that he didn't want her to know he was her father. He didn't want to spoil her life."

"Shucks! Piffle!" replied the other truculently. "The town's damned well goin' to know she's his daughter. The town's goin' to be purified by the truth. This Rest Awhile Tavern is goin' to be made a happy, happy home if I know anything, an' I guess I do; but I'll have a swill first. Out with your bottle from the cupboard, 'Liza."

He looked round the room. "I got to have a drink an' a good big drink, for I got a thirst, an' it's been a good big walk from where they put me off the train. An' after the drink I'll have a good big sleep on that good big sofa over there. Gimme that drink, 'Liza, on this instep, as the niggers say. I'm dry, and whisky's the only thing that makes my throat wet. D'you hear, sis?"

For an instant she hesitated. To give drink to a drunken man was a terrible thing. Yet she must gain time; Cora must be spared a shock. She must see Minden, who might perhaps find a way to prevent catastrophe. She remembered that some brandy had been left from the occasion of Sheldon's illness.

"Wait a minute, Robert," she whispered, for her voice failed her in excitement. "I'll bring it."

She went into the next room, and presently returned quickly with a pitcher of water and a bottle in which there was about an eighth of a pint of brandy.

Struthers greedily snatched the bottle from her hand, uncorked it and smelled it. Then he said with a leer, "That's better than whisky—good old Three Star!"

Raising it to his lips, he drank every drop of it; then caught the pitcher of water from her hand and took a gulp.

"Now for the good big sofa and a sleep," he said; "and when I get up there'll only be rest in the 'Rest Awhile' if I have a room to meself an' me board an' lodgin'."

Then he threw himself sprawling on the sofa, and closed his eyes to sleep; but half a minute later they opened heavily. He saw his sister looking at him with an agony in her face which made him laugh in derision.

"'S all right, 'Liza. Get that room ready for your lovin' brother," he mumbled, and instantly sank into a heavy sleep.

Three hours later the ne'er-do-weel awoke from his drunken sleep with parched lips and a bad temper. As he came to a sitting posture and blinked his weasel eyes, he caught sight of Minden seated with arms resting on the table in front of him. Minden's eyes were fixed on his;

he had sat for a half-hour in the same position waiting till Struthers should wake.

For a moment the two men gazed at each other in silence. Struthers anticipated trouble, and was in a mood to fight. It was nearly twenty years since they had seen each other, and both had lived hard lives, but Struthers's life had been degraded, besotted, and poverty-stricken. He had only come to Askatoon to borrow money from his sister, but now his drunken mind saw but one thing—the price of silence as to Cora's relationship to Minden. He looked to find threatening in Minden's face, and was met by an almost friendly smile.

Minden spoke first.

"Have a drink," he said, pointing to a large glass pitcher of water with a tumbler beside it.

Struthers's lips were parched and dry. "I'll have lager," he said. "I'll have Milwaukee lager—a whole or two halves. I'm dry."

"This is a temperance hotel," Minden replied easily. "Try Adam's ale first, Bob, then you can step across the street for your beer."

A sullen, defiant look came into Struthers's face. "Temperance—shucks! Nice sort of joint this? Two holy Christians with a Christian baby keeping a deception-house. What's a hotel for if it ain't for drink—good, spiritual drink?"

"Well, that's all the drink you'll get here, Bob," was the dry reply. "'Spiritual drink' is the word; it goes. But there ain't any spirituous drinks to be had here; so if you must have it, just toddle across the way. But if I had a thirst like yours, I'd make that pitcher of water look small in about two thirsty seconds. Sip it up, man.

There'll be room for the lager after. What you want now is coolin'."

"I want money for the lager," was the stubborn reply. "I'm dead broke; but if I wasn't, I'd still want money for the lager. I ain't here for nothin'—I ain't here for nothin', I tell you that." He stumbled forward to the table. "I'm here for my own good—that's why I'm here; and I'm here for good and all, and ever, d'you understand?"

The complacent smile did not leave Minden's face, yet there was a savage look creeping into his eyes, which his strong will kept calling back into obscurity.

"All right, Bob, you can have the money for the lager," he replied, "but I'd like you to have a drink of the wine of the country first. I'd like you to show your friendliness by having a swig of Adam's ale out of that pitcher. Hospitality has its rules, and the rule for a visitor is that he's got to drink what his host shoves him."

"But he ain't got to drink what his *landlord* shoves him," was the snarling reply.

"Oh, shut up, guzzler," rapped out Minden. "This is my tavern, an' because 'Liza Finley is your sister, and because she's part of this concern, I'm for treatin' you like a bidden guest. So drink the water, Bob, then'll come the lager later, if you've got to have it."

The half-sobered man was in a perverse mood. He had a feeling that Minden was afraid of him. Therefore he would turn the screw. He had tortured many an animal just to see it helplessly resisting his malice, and he had tortured some men; but never had he had a chance to torture as big a man-animal as this.

"You'll give me what I want when I want it, or you'll get what you don't want when you don't want it," he

snarled. "You want nothin' said about your bein' the father of Cora Finley, eh? Well, I can spoil her just for the price of one bottle of lager. I can take the pride out of the silly, stuck-up daughter of a thief."

He had gone too far. With the flat of his hand Minden struck him in the face, and he fell back on the sofa with a bleeding mouth.

Minden's impulse had been too swift and overpowering to check, and he had given away to it with every dormant passion of life storming his senses. In a swift reaction, however, he controlled himself, and muttered a broken prayer, incongruous as it was.

As Struthers raised himself again, with a bleeding mouth, Minden caught a big handkerchief from his pocket and tossed it over, saying quietly:

"Keep my girl out of it, you swab. P'r'aps she got out of your way as you passed; p'r'aps she looked down on you, eh? Well, a drunken hog in his wallow is apt to turn the stomach. Go on, use that handkerchief. Don't think because I'm converted and jined the church that I ain't a man any longer. Bob Struthers, I'm a Christian, but I certainly will have to kill you if you mention my girl's name in any way except respectful. You've surely got off your head. Here, you drink this water"—he got the pitcher and glass from the table—"here, you drink this water, an' don't try to bluff me, because I've got just as much man in me as I ever had, an' there's a point where I'm not going to check it. Drink, now—drink, I tell you! It'll do you good."

In their boyhood days Minden had always been the master, and Struthers had knuckled down to him. His tractability, however, had ever been measured by the physical punishment he received.

"That swat in the gob was like old times, wasn't it?" continued Minden with the smile which had been on his face when Struthers waked.

"Christian! You!" responded the now quite sobered man. "Christian! You've got as much devil in you as you allus had. It's bred in the bone—the rest's only make-believe. Your grandfather was a local preacher, an' the strain of it's in you; but it's only your grandfather haunting you; it ain't real. Shucks! You ain't goin' to stick it out. You'll go back to the old game all right. Why, I might as well try to drink that swash every day,"—he pointed to the almost empty pitcher of water—"instead of whisky or lager. I keep goin' back to it, an' you'll go back. Talk about bein' saved, when every day you live's a lie! You're only figurin' to be good, 'cause you want your daughter to think a lot of you. Can't I see! I didn't know you when you was ten years old for nothin', you non-such."

Minden was now back again in his chair at the table, master of himself, with a friendly look in his face, and his mind well controlled.

"I guess there's some truth in what you say, Robert Simeon Struthers," he conceded. "I may backslide; but all the more reason I shouldn't let my girl know who I am. I've been runnin' straight quite a while, and I've had a lot of comfort out of gettin' religion. I haven't wanted to do what I used to do. I been happy and respected, I been of use—yes, I been of use. I been workin' for other people, doin' somethin' for them, and——"

Struthers was a mongrel cur naturally, and his evil life had made him a ruthless brute. If anybody could handle him it was Minden, who had lorded it over him in days

long gone, but in his weasel eyes now the Brute was alive, the under-world, the jungle thing.

"Well, you can do something for me if you're out for doing good," he said. "I ain't had any luck any time. Nothing I ever done come out right. The world owed me a living, an' hasn't ever paid it. So, you got to pay it now. You've got a lot of money that don't belong to you; an' I got a hold on you. I got a loose tongue; an' I can't control it without a gold bridle an' bit. I got to be paid."

Minden nodded contemptuously. "Yes, I know all that, man alive. You're a dirty dog, of course—you always was. I used to thrash you, way back, but I oughter have killed you. Well, I've swatted your mouth to-day, an' I don't mind paying you now to keep your filthy mouth shut. What's your price, skunk?"

Struthers was taken aback. He had thought there would be storm and trouble, but that in the end Minden would see there was nothing else to do but to grunt and pay.

He made his shot at once, however. "What I want —what I want—is a home; bed and board, an' enough cash to get my drink across the street, if I can't have it here. 'Liza Finley's my sister. She's in clover, an' she ought to let me be in grass."

"Get down to business," said Minden, sharply now. "You want your bed, your board, and some cash. How much cash do you think would buy your beer?"

"I want five dollars a week and bed and board—that's my offer."

Minden shook his head. "You couldn't live here. This is a temperance tavern run on Christian lines, an' you'd go on gettin' drunk. I'm not proposin' to keep you here,

though it'd be cheaper. You could have the money to board and lodge somewhere else, an' you could have the five dollars a week, but you'd have to keep out of this place when you was drunk. I'd like to put it to you, though, whether you could settle in Askatoon an' be satisfied? You've been travelin' a long time—d'you think the one long street of this place is enough for you? There's a heap of prejudice in this town. What would you think of goin' somewhere else? Did you never think you'd like to try Australia? There's a lot of toughs like you over there."

The weasel eyes almost closed with avarice, but they caught sight of Minden's face, and the light in them flickered. This Bill Minden was different from the Bill Minden he used to know; this Bill Minden appeared to have a further reach. There was something uncanny about him, in spite of his smile; something that made Struthers afraid. His head twitched; it was as though something had got hold of his nerves.

"Travelin' costs money," he stammered. "You want to get rid of me; you don't want me here, where you're mayor, and so you begin to——"

"Of course I don't want you here. I never could tell what you mightn't do when you got drunk. Then, if you split, I might forget I was saved, an' kill you. That's why I'd like to see you hunch away to Australia. They drink kerosene in the back-blocks there, 'stead of whisky. You've got strange tastes, an' that'd suit you. What do you think you'd take an' go? There's a boat leaving Vancouver day after to-morrow. I'll fetch you over to Vancouver by train. I'll see you off."

The cunning eyes widened a little now. "How much

are you givin' me for that, if I go? I got a lot of rheumatism these days; I can't work like I used to."

Minden waved a hand in scorn. "Work! You never done any work at all. Somebody else always worked for you—chiefly women. That's all the more reason why you should get out among the aborigines an' live in a black-fellows' camp. You could live a long time on what I'm going to give you. Does three thousand dollars an' your passage-money look all right to you?"

The weasel eyes opened wider in spite of themselves. The vision of innumerable bottles of lager beer and many a drunken and lascivious day passed before the vision of the beast.

He got to his feet. "I guess I could about do it for that," he conceded.

"Well, as you can do it for that," responded Minden, "then you'll see how fair I am when I tell you that I'm goin' to give you three thousand dollars an' your passage-money."

"You can afford it," returned the other, with sudden swagger in his bearing. "I'll tell you in a week or so what I'll do. I want to rest awhile first."

Minden's voice hardened. "I guess not. I can afford it this week, but I mightn't be able to afford it in a week or so," was the dry answer.

"You're goin' to leave here to-night at eleven o'clock, by the through express," he continued, "an' I'm goin' with you. On the steamer *Mopoke* I'll hand you the cash."

"I got to have some beer right away," answered the other in acquiescence, "an' I'm hungry, too."

Minden barred his way to the door. "You can't have a drop of beer in this house, an' you've got to stay here

till the train starts. You've got to do without your beer till eleven o'clock; then you can have a full bottle on the train. If what I propose ain't worth while you can light out now, an' you'll get nothin'; an' then if I happen to forget myself, I'll spoil you. If you hurt my girl I'd find you—religion or no religion—I'd find you if you was in Patagonia. Which are you taking on—to do without your beer, or to have the other? Put it up to me now or never."

With a muttered oath Struthers turned to the table, and seized a water-bottle.

"Gimme somethin' to eat," he said.

CHAPTER IX

NATURE HAS HER SAY

BRIBERY answering blackmail is not the highest form of diplomacy, but it was successful in the case of Robert Simeon Struthers, who sailed from Vancouver on the last sea-voyage he would make. Minden had some heart-searching as to the propriety of the course he had taken, but anything likely to injure his daughter caused him to harden his heart. To make her happy was an obsession. That was why he focused his interest upon the Sink-or-Swim mine. Through it she could be provided with an "elegant" husband and a fortune also. He believed in the mine now even more fanatically than Sheldon.

So it was that, when Sheldon came to him in great anxiety, because of injury to the mine by fire and the breakdown of machinery, also in regard to costs of the lawsuit which, though he had won, were heavy, Minden met him with a cheerful eye.

"How much do you want?" Minden asked him, going straight to the heart of the business.

Sheldon hesitated a moment, then he said, "I don't like telling you, it seems such a big sum. The breakdown and the fire and the law costs will eat up ten thousand dollars, but——"

He paused. There was something on his mind, and he hesitated to say it.

Minden came to his rescue. "Well, what is it, youngster? Got brain-congestion? Out with it! Don't mind me."

The young man pulled himself together and returned

Minden's look firmly. "Of course, I ought to speak out frankly to you, a partner, but I feel you're risking so much on my——"

"I'm risking nothin' at all," interjected Minden with a chuckle. "I know what I'm doin'. If there's one dollar in that mine there's millions, and I saw from the start you'd got to have more money. There's nothin' in workin' a big mine penuriously. On your present plan there's a good livin', an' there's twenty per cent. or more on capital; but another forty thousand put into machinery, development, an' hands'd make the profits three hundred per cent. I know what I'm talking about. You want ten thousand dollars for breakdown and the law costs. Settled; you've got it. Then there's forty thousand dollars that's wanted for development before we float the company for five million dollars. Settled; you've got it—anyhow, you'll have it in three days."

Sheldon was staggered. When he could get his breath he said: "It doesn't seem possible you mean it—but yes, of course, you do. You're not loaning all this money to the mine without a mortgage on my share?"

"No mortgage, if I know it. I want another quarter of the mine; then you and I'll be goin' halves, and I'll think I got it cheap enough."

Sheldon's face lighted. "I'm glad you said that," he replied. "By rights you ought to have three-quarters of the mine, because I mightn't have had anything out of it, if it wasn't for you. I'm as glad as can be."

Minden nodded. "So am I. But I am saying this, too, son, that as soon as this matter is fixed, you're goin' to have ten thousand a year for managing the biz."

Sheldon made a protesting gesture. "Oh, I don't mind that for the present! When I'm married, though, I'll want

more cash. It doesn't cost me much to live now, but then I'll want ten thousand dollars a year, of course."

"Yes, it doesn't cost you much to live now," remarked Minden. "As near as I can figure, you spend 'bout as much as one of your workmen; but you've got to have something like what you're worth when you get married. To my thinkin' you'll have fifty times what you're worth when you're married, Mr. Sheldon," he added, meaningly.

A warm, happy look crossed over Sheldon's face. "Yes; she's worth fifty times what I am, Mr. Minden," he replied.

"You don't think you'll ever repent marrying a girl like her, seein' what you've come from?" Minden asked, his eyes searching Sheldon's face closely.

Sheldon laughed happily. "She's a lady, isn't she? Is there anything the matter with her manners? When the governor's wife passed through, did you see any difference 'twixt her and her excellency?"

Minden chuckled. "Goin' just as easy with her excellency as with me," he answered—"talkin' as if they was sisters."

"Well, that's being a lady," answered Sheldon decisively. "What more do you want? I've seen a shoemaker as well bred as any royalty."

"You wouldn't want to give her up, then?" asked Minden, lightly, but with an inquisitorial look.

"That's what I'm always afraid of," answered Sheldon. "I don't want to give her up, but I might have to, if she took a fancy to someone else."

"Then why don't you marry her at once?" queried the other.

"Because I want the mine to be steadied down to its

work and going strong, so that she won't see any trouble in my face as there was in it to-day."

Now Minden smiled. "That's right, son, that's right; you've got the hang of the thing. You be good to her always like that. I guess you can get your marriage licence out. With the fifty thousand dollars I'm going to pay for another quarter share, you can bet that mine'll run with greased wheels—like a snake down a hole."

"Well, I think you're right," answered Sheldon.

"Then go and see the lady and fix the day," urged Minden, "for you never can tell what'll happen. Better take things when the fit's on. I've got a fit on for the Sink-or-Swim, and you've got a fit on for the finest girl ever was; then let's act while it's on—while it's on."

They shook hands with a great swing and parted. Minden looked after the athletic figure with pride in his eyes. "There's a lot in good blood," he said. "You can breed men same as you breed animals."

As Minden, in the mayor's office at the City Hall, stood ruminating on the going of Sheldon upon a mission which brought back vividly the boisterous joy of his own courtship twenty-five years before, a misshapen figure in the open doorway of the room disturbed his vision.

"Well, Kernaghan, what brings you here? Isn't the check all right?" he said, remarking the green-looking paper in Patsy Kernaghan's hand. He saw it was a check he had given Kernaghan the day before for some casual work.

"Aw, Mr. Mayor, sir," answered Kernaghan sadly, "I took this check to the bank, an' they sez to me this morning, 'Put your name on the back of it,' they sez. 'I'm not paid for doing that,' sez I. 'Well, you'll get no

money unless you do,' sez they to me. An' there I stood in the arly marnin' with my strength not come full, writin' me name on the back of a check. Then what d'ye think happened? I was just passin' it in, an' they was countin' out the money behind the bars of the cage, where they kep it, when in comes the Young Doctor, and what d'ye think he said? He wasn't lookin' very well. Shure, he always had a kind word for me no matter what time o' day it was, but in he come an' just nods to me. Then he goes to the counter. 'I want to see Mr. Bristow,' he sez—that's the manager, you know. Just then Mr. Bristow comes into the cage behin' the bars. 'Good marnin',' he sez to the Young Doctor. 'Good marnin', Bristow,' sez he. 'Here's a pretty bad business,' sez he. 'What's that?' sez Mr. Bristow with a sharp look. 'Prince's Bank is gone,' sez the Young Doctor. 'It closed its doors this marnin'. I have a telegram. Ten cents on the dollar, I s'pose,' sez he; an' I had five thousand dollars in it.'"

At the name of the bank, Minden's face paled, and a sort of film came over his eyes. His hand had been in his beard as he listened to Patsy Kernaghan talk, and at the mention of the bank catastrophe the fingers clutched the beard so that his lower lip was dragged into an involuntary grimace of torture. That was all. He stood rigid and dazed for a moment.

"Prince's Bank! Prince's Bank—are you sure that's what the Young Doctor said?" he asked huskily.

"Aw, it's Prince's Bank in Winnipeg, all right," answered Kernaghan. "There's no mistake about that. It's the same that's on this check you give me yisterday. Am I to be losin' it, Mr. Minden? Is it that I'm not to have me monney because the bank's broke?"

Minden reached out and took the check.

"Of course whin the Young Doctor spoke up like that to that man in the cage," continued Kernaghan, "they grabbed the monney they was paying out to me, an' put it back in the till. So what was I to do but bring that back to you?"

Without a word Minden took from his pocket a handful of bills. Counting a number of them he handed them over to Kernaghan. Patsy took them eagerly; but seeing the strange troubled look in Minden's face, he said:

"Would it be hurtin' you, Mr. Minden, the breakin' of that bank? Had they anny of your monney? Shure, the Young Doctor's losin' five thousand dollars—you didn't have that much in the bank, did ye?"

"Five thousand dollars—five thousand dollars—well, yes, I had that much," replied Minden in a low voice. "Get out, Patsy, I got some business to do."

Patsy made for the door, but suddenly came back. "I don't think I'll take the monney, Mr. Mayor," he said. "I'll not be needin' it. Shure, I've got plenty somewhere."

Minden took him by the shoulders and turned him round. "Be off with you," he said. "D'ye think that'd save me if I was in trouble?"

Patsy pocketed the money. "Aw well," he remarked, without any ulterior thought, "aw well, if you've lost a lot of monney, shure you always know where to get more, as you got what you lost."

Some time afterwards, seated in his chair at the mayoral desk, Minden raised his head from a long reverie, and repeated Patsy Kernaghan's words: "Shure, you always know where to get more, as you got what you lost."

If Prince's Bank was bankrupt, then he was, in the language of the West, stony-broke, for very lately he had removed from his bank at Montreal nearly all the money

he had to Prince's Bank at Winnipeg. Ten cents in the dollar! What would that mean to him now? That which was to be a fortune for his girl and Sheldon, where would it be? If Prince's Bank was gone, then his girl's future was in danger. There was the hotel, of course, but that, on a sudden sale, would never bring what he paid for it; for the success of the Rest Awhile Temperance Hotel was due to his own notorious personality, and right well the public knew that. If what Patsy Kernaghan had said was true, all he had left was the hotel, and the mine would be gone and the fortune it promised.

A stupefying gloom settled upon him, until Patsy Kernaghan's words came to his mind—"You always know where to get more, as you got what you lost." How had he got what he lost? By the robbery of trains, by breaking the law, by the highwayman's methods; by the life which he had put forever behind. Yet here it was staring him in the face with its dreadful allurement and the drag of ancient habit, the perilous joy of criminal enterprise.

With a strange, apprehensive, yet furtive look in his face, on which a light was playing such as plays through a crevice upon the grim architecture of a cave, he left the City Hall and went into the street. There he met the Young Doctor, who had evidently regained his composure.

"You've heard what's happened about Prince's Bank?" the Young Doctor questioned.

"I've heard," Minden answered calmly.

"I had five thousand dollars in it, and I suppose it's all gone," remarked the Young Doctor. "It took a lot of making, that five thousand. I hope you haven't lost much."

"Not so much that I can't replace it," answered Minden with a strange smile, and passed on.

The Young Doctor's eyes followed him. "I don't like the look of his face," he said to himself. "It seems to hide a lot and yet it betrays a lot. I suppose he hadn't all his eggs in one basket, anyhow."

Minden's face, as the Young Doctor had seen it, was the mirror of his mind. Everything was in disorder there. All his plans and hopes were overturned; a blow had fallen which splintered into fragments the edifice so carefully builded during the past months.

He had thought himself saved by the sacrifice of Calvary, and since his conversion it had not seemed too hard, his emotions being what they were, to steer the narrow way; but all at once, in the presence of his ruined hopes, he saw by the flames which burned up his designs the Bill Minden of old beckoning him back to the dark trail of the past.

The night of the day when he learned of the ruin of Prince's Bank he walked the prairie with a smoldering fire in his brain, with a sullen remorse and despair coursing through his being. He had thought he was "saved by the blood of the Lamb," but in the black passions possessing him now, he knew that he had only, as he said to himself, "felt good," not been good. He realized now he was not good in the sense that the class-leaders in the meeting-house understood it. In his agitated courses on that night of destiny he passed the meeting-house. The prayer-meeting was ending, and the prayer-people, as he had called them, were singing a hymn to close their exercises:

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."

He could detect among the singers the voice of Mrs. Finley. He knew that rapt, rather piercing, falsetto tone which had in it the loving passion of the fanatic. He knew now that his own guilty stains had never been washed away; that he was still Bill Minden, who had defeated the law and been defeated by the law.

He had an impulse to enter the meeting-house and, standing up before these real Christians, blurt out his repudiation of all he had said and done in the name of religion and of all religion had done for him—as everyone and he himself had thought.

It was as though the man he was of old was whispering in his ear. He had the most curious illusion that he was standing outside himself; as though, indeed, he had an astral body, and that the Bill Minden who had been notorious on a continent was telling the Bill Minden who ruled the town of Askatoon, and kept a khan for the wayfarer, that he had for months been in a trance, and was the victim of an aberration.

As he passed on, the singing growing fainter, two hands seemed knocking at the door of his mind.

One was that of the little misshapen Celt, Patsy Kernaghan, who had said: "If you've lost a lot of money, shure you always know where to get more, as you got what you lost."

The other hand was that of a man in Vancouver—Jim Starboard, a criminal friend of old days—who had written a few days before, telling him of a train that would be carrying a half-million dollars from the next steamer from Japan. Starboard had suggested that they should hold it up at a station where it was due at midnight. The passengers would be asleep, the express-van would only be guarded by two men, and the game would be worth the

risk. Jim Starboard had, in his day, been almost as expert as Bill Minden, and had been even luckier in escaping the penalties of his crimes.

Now, as Minden paced the prairie, all that Starboard had written kept besieging his brain. At first there was only confusion. He was tossed between the waters of the harbor and the sea. He had been in harbor for more than an eloquent and peaceful year; but now the sea of ancient habit fell upon the breakwaters which his resolutions had erected, and at last it swept them away.

Beyond everything else he had wished to see Sheldon and his daughter married, and to feel that the girl owed to him her fortune—some compensation for his being her father. For Sheldon to lose all now, for his girl not to have what he had planned for her—the inevitable, the indispensable thing—was a torture to his storm-tossed brain. As the night wore on, he heard a voice from Vancouver forever saying to him: "There's a way, there's a way!"

Yet, with it all, something that had come to him out of his new life kept holding him, as a child lightly holds the hand of one it trusts. In sudden emotion he fell upon his knees in the stubble and prayed. He did not know what he said. It was a cry of the agonized, unstable nature, of one who in natural bent towards wickedness was strong with the selfishness of the materialist; but in his inner spiritual being was the victim of the emotions of a character irresponsible and wayward, if kind and generous.

His strivings were of no avail. Nothing came to help him; there was no response to his call. It was as though he had only appealed to the Power beyond because he could say, when another crime would be added to his record, that he had prayed for grace to resist, and it had failed

him. Who can tell? Such dual personalities have their own tragedies. Grimly he rose from his knees as dawn touched the hills. He saw the faint glimmer of saffron, then turned his back upon the eastern sky and faced the mountains in the West—faced the mountains, and Vancouver, and temptation, and the old bad ways.

A few hours later he sent a telegram in language which only Jim Starboard could understand. It was not addressed in Starboard's own name. A few hours later still he sent a letter addressed to Starboard to a hotel at a railway station about eighty miles west. When he made up his mind he always acted with decision.

In Askatoon things moved slowly on. A few people had been hurt by the failure of the bank, and no one had the faintest idea of how much it had meant to Minden. He went his way as usual, and only two people in the place suspected that something was disturbing Minden's mind. Only the Young Doctor saw some subtle change in him, something that lay secluded in the depth of his eyes; while Cora Finley, seeing his face pale, attributed it to some slight illness which table delicacies could cure.

Minden had promised Sheldon that he would give him a check for fifty thousand dollars within three days. On the morning of the third day he handed it to him, saying: "Good luck to us, and don't waste it! It's cost a lot."

After Sheldon left his office to deposit the check in the bank, Minden sat long at his table in a kind of dream. At length something like a smile came upon his face; the trouble which had hovered over it for days passed away, and he said aloud:

"That's settled it! He's got the check, and he's got to have the money. I can't go back on that."

It would take several days for the check to go to the bank on which it was drawn at Montreal, and the money would be there if all went well.

In the dead of night a stranger visited Minden in his office, coming by the back garden, as Sheldon had come. After a long interview the stranger's last words were:

"Yes, I've got it clear. Listen and see if I have. The Syndicate is to place at once, through half a dozen sources, fifty-five thousand dollars to your credit in the Laurentian Bank of Montreal. As mayor you've got to pay a visit to Forthright in the mountains and attend a banquet there—that fits in good and sweet. You're to take the eleven o'clock express back to Askatoon, and at Goldmark Station you're to leave it, without being seen except by our pal the conductor, that's in with us. You're to wait there for the train for the East. At Goldmark the job's to be done by you and me. All you want is the fifty-five thousand; and I'll take all I can for the Syndicate. Then you're to get back to Askatoon in your own way afterwards, and I'm to make tracks my own way. Have I got it? Is it right?"

Minden nodded. "You've got it, Jim. Settled."

"I knew you'd come back to us, Bill," the other said. "You was the greatest war-boss that ever faced the guns. We can all take off our hats to you. That was a great game of yours playing 'saved' and preachin' here at Askatoon, and gettin' to be mayor and all that; but I don't see what you was driving at. You've done it in style, but I don't git it."

"You don't have to git it," was Minden's reply. "You couldn't if you tried."

The other prepared to go, and opened the door. The

room was as dark as the night, and he could not be seen from outside. "Well, good-bye, old Bill," he said. "This ain't the first time we been in harness together, an' it won't be the last neether."

They shook hands, Jim Starboard disappeared, and the door closed. For a moment Minden stood silent in the darkness, then he said:

"You're wrong. It is the last time, Jim. I've got sense enough to know that. It's the last, last time of all. If it comes off, I'm gone away, east or west; if it doesn't come off—no, it's got to come off! I'm risking it for her, an' I know I'm risking her, too; but it's too late to turn back. I've got to go on with it now. It's the last, last time, though, so help me God!"

CHAPTER X

SOMEONE MUST PAY

It seemed as though the foothills were in rebellion against the mountains, and that hundreds of ruined regiments were breaking in blind disorder upon the plains. Never, perhaps, had the long escarpment of the Rockies known such a storm, or the plains been swept by a wilder flood. Like some red native of the northern wilds who mutilates himself in frenzy to show how much the human frame can bear, so on this night Nature, the benign mother, ravaged her own bosom, tore out her own eyes, shrieked the agony of her own making—abandoned, merciless, a cynical, sinister hag. It seemed as though she made this massive turmoil to shelter in her cloak of storm one reckless man who, having shamefully sinned and repented of his sin, was again returning to the sins he had forsaken.

In all the days of all the years he had lived, Bill Minden never had such an opportunity for carrying out his dark purposes; and at Goldmark Station, in the savagery of the tempest, the thing was done which Starboard and himself had planned to do.

The man who takes refuge with the devil must pay the devil's fees; and the man who robbed the train at Goldmark found, as the night went on, that Nature which had given him the shelter of the storm, in derision made him the victim of the storm. In the hours when he worked the linesmen's hand-car, as had been arranged, over the rails up the grade and down the incline, through the foothills and out upon the prairie, he was punished by a thousand whips of rain and wind and hail, until at last he reached

the point where he must forsake the hand-car and take the trail to his home in Askatoon.

It was just before the break of dawn that, like one who has been man-handled by an army, with haggard, bloodless face, and deep-sunken eyes, with matted hair and beard, and a hand that clutched his chest in pain, Bill Minden crawled up the steps of his back garden into his office, and on through the silent hallway upstairs to his bedroom. There, moaning to himself, he hid safely under a loosened board of the floor the soaking clothes he wore. Then he put out another suit and hung them on a chair, as though he had taken them off for the night, and crawled into bed, having drunk near a tumbler of raw whisky to check the terrible cold which had seized his lungs. For a long hour he suffered greatly; then, as dawn spread, he rang the bell.

A half-hour later the Young Doctor was by his bedside, and when he turned away from it to meet the sharp inquiry of Mrs. Finley's eyes the look in his face could give no hope to any anxious friend of the mayor of Askatoon. Outside the door of the bedroom one word he used to Cora Finley, which summoned the color from her face.

"Pneumonia," he said.

All had worked well for Minden's plans, and all had worked ill for Minden himself. His racked and fevered body paid in its agony, second by second, for every dollar which Starboard had carried away to cover the fifty-five thousand dollars in the Laurentian Bank which the nefarious Syndicate had placed to his credit.

Not for hours after the train had left Goldmark Station were the armed, gagged guards of the express-van in which the money was carried found and released. Two had

been taken from behind, and a third in his excitement had seen only a masked man and a pistol. His explanations were incoherent. As for Minden, did not the conductor (who was in league with the robbers) stop the train at two o'clock in the morning at the Askatoon Station to let Minden off in the storm? It was only three hours after this event, which never happened, that the robbery was discovered.

It had all been perfectly done, and Askatoon had no suspicion of its mayor. Hundreds of its citizens passed and repassed the Rest Awhile Hotel as three anxious days went on. Prayer-meetings were held; resolutions of sympathy by public bodies were passed. The Young Doctor had almost to force his way to and from Bill Minden's home, so emotional and pertinacious were the people who waylaid him.

All that he would say was, "Where there's life there's hope"; but from his mind hope had vanished.

One man, far away at the capital—Terence Brennan, the railway millionaire—had a strong suspicion that the greatest train-robber of modern times had been at work again, but when his detectives informed him that Bill Minden was dying there was nothing to do. As for the money, if Minden had committed the crime he would certainly not have brought it to Askatoon.

At this moment for a detective to have breathed the suspicion of Minden's complicity in Askatoon would have made him the victim of a partisan populace. Askatoon had nothing but gratitude and affection for Minden. Open-handed and open-hearted he had lived among them. Among them he had found "peace." To them he had given greatly. Over them he had ruled with a rose branch, and not a rod of iron.

When Mrs. Finley told Minden in one of the moments when he was free from agony that there were scores of people outside the Rest Awhile Hotel praying for his recovery, sending him their best wishes, he whispered, "That's good, that's good. If it'll only last me out, then *she'll* remember me kindly."

Mrs. Finley's eyes flashed. She saw deeper than anyone, except the Young Doctor.

"You can live if you want to," she said. "You know you can live if you want to. You're not fighting—you're giving in to it."

They were singing a hymn outside the hotel. How well he knew it! How deep a part it had played in his life!

> "There's a land that is fairer than day,
> And by faith we may see it afar——"

"If they'll only feel like that till I'm gone!" he whispered, a cloud upon his face—a wan, wasted look. No hope, no faith shone in his eyes; his house of life was crumbling, and he knew it, and in a sense he was glad.

Now and again when Cora entered the room his eyes followed her with a hungry look, in which there was the only gleam that lighted the darkness of his last days.

When she spoke to him or took his fevered hand, the glimmer of a defiant joy stole into his eyes; and as he sat hour after hour while the pain tore him and the hand of penalty tugged at his body to dismember it from the soul, in his mind he was saying: "She'll be all right; she'll be all right."

To the appeal of members of the Grace Church class-meeting, who wished to come and pray beside his bed, the Young Doctor gave a sharp denial. He would admit none of them, class-leaders or minister.

"You'll only hasten the end," he said. "He's all right; he's one of you. He knows the way Home. He's not fit to listen or to speak, and I won't have it."

So it was that when the end came suddenly, and the knowledge of its coming spread in Bill Minden's mind like a flash of flame, he half drew himself up, and with a last flicker of light through his glazing eyes towards Cora, who sat beside his bed, he whispered: "Could you kiss me, little gal?"

With swimming eyes she kissed his cheek and lowered him to the pillow again with her arms at his shoulders and her hands under his head. A light shone in his face for a moment, then a shadow crossed it, and his lips moved. None could hear what he said, except, perhaps, Mrs. Finley, who was bending over him.

Once more he turned his sightless eyes to the girl, and his fingers fluttered towards her. As she took and pressed them gently, the Young Doctor turned away from the bed with a sigh, for in that moment Bill Minden had gone upon his greatest adventure.

"What was it he said?" asked the Young Doctor later.

"He said: 'Mercy, mercy; Lord, have mercy,'" Mrs. Finley replied.

"He didn't need to ask that," remarked Cora, weeping. "He found mercy at the camp meeting."

"Perhaps, perhaps," remarked the Young Doctor, as he closed his pocket medicine-case and prepared to go. "'But Jordan is a hard road to travel,' as the hymn says."

The true story of the Sink-or-Swim Mine, and how it came to flourish, is not known. The man and woman who own it would not be happy if they did know. Neither would have had prosperity at the price.

THE END

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